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NOTES

Last May and June, **PETER BROOKS** was in Paris, not as a participant in the revolution, he tells us, "but as an impassioned and distinctly non-objective observer, and the article, drafted in the peace of the Norman countryside after I had left the Paris of Thermidor, represents an attempt to make some immediate sense of history." . . . **FREDERICK SEIDEL** is completing a second book of poems. . . . **LEO BERSANI** teaches French at Rutgers. . . . **Going Places, LEONARD MICHAELS'** first book, is being published in March '69 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. . . . **JACK NEWFIELD** is the assistant editor of the **Village Voice,** the author of a biography of Robert Kennedy, to be published by Random House in September, and, he adds, "a member of the Old New Left." . . . Viking has just published a new volume of **LEONARD COHEN's** poems. . . . **hans magnus enzensberger** latest book is **Poems for People who Don't Read Poems,** published last year by Atheneum. . . . A graduate student at Columbia University, **RICHARD BURGIN** writes novels and stories. His book of interviews with Jorge Luis Borges will be published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston this spring. . . . The author of **A Short History of Ethics,** and of **Secularization and Moral Change, ALASDAIR MacINTYRE** is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex and Professor of the History of Ideas at Brandeis. . . . **ELIZABETH DALTON** teaches English at Barnard. . . . **IRVING HOWE** is spending the year in California. . . . Among **PAUL FUSSELL's** books is **Poetic Meter and Poetic Form. . . . JOSEPH PEQUIGNEY** teaches English at Stony Brook and is working on a book on **Paradise Lost. . . . MORRIS DICKSTEIN** tells us that he "spent the summer working on the restructuring of Columbia University," where he teaches courses on Blake and Romantic poetry. . . . The author of **Children of Crisis, ROBERT COLES** is publishing a children's book, **The Grass Pipe,** this spring. He prepared the text of **Still Hungry in America** which is also coming out this spring.

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THE FOURTH WORLD

PART III

PARIS

> The crisis begun in May, 1968, is not a "crisis": through it, we enter into a new period of history. What has been aimed at and shaken, through criticism and through struggle, is not only the political regime, but the social system; and not only capitalist private property, but the entire organization of life, all the "values" that modern societies, whether of the West or the East, use or fabricate, impose or insinuate, to disarm desire. You have understood nothing about our movement if you do not see this: what swept across France — to the point of creating a power vacuum — was not the spirit of professional demands, nor the wish for a poltical change, but the desire for other relations among men. The force of this desire has shaken the edifice of exploitation, oppression and alienation; it has frightened all the men, the organizations, the parties directly or indirectly interested in the exercise of power, and they are attempting by all means to suppress it. They will never have done with doing so.
>
> —*Rapport Interdisciplinaire, Nanterre*

May 14, 1968, in the Sorbonne courtyard: what you noticed first was the posters — not just the faces of Marx, Lenin and Mao staring triumphant from the columns supporting the architrave inscribed to the honor of Cardinal Richelieu, or those of Trotsky, Castro, Che Guevara plastered along the walls, but the hand-lettered posters everywhere, the first spontaneous expression of the Cultural Revolution, the programs for a future world. IMAGINATION TAKES POWER, proclaimed one. And others: TAKE YOUR DESIRES FOR REALITIES. CONSUMER SOCIETY MUST DIE A VIOLENT DEATH. LIBERTY IS THE CRIME WHICH CONTAINS ALL OTHER CRIMES. WE DON'T WANT A WORLD WHERE THE GUARANTEE OF NOT DYING OF HUNGER IS TRADED AGAINST THE GUARANTEE OF DYING OF BOREDOM. THE MORE I MAKE LOVE, THE MORE I WANT TO MAKE THE

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REVOLUTION; THE MORE I MAKE THE REVOLUTION, THE MORE I WANT TO MAKE LOVE. And, above a sign forbidding smoking, IT IS FORBIDDEN TO FORBID (*Law of May 13, 1968*).

For five extraordinary weeks, from the evening of May 13 until the arrival of the police on June 16, Imagination held power at the Sorbonne. "It is forbidden to forbid": in the courtyard, orthodox party Communists, Maoists, Trotskyites, Castroists, Anarchists, Situationists set up tables side by side to distribute the tracts which kept the mimeograph machines running round the clock. Groups formed and dissolved around workers come from the striking factories to discuss the next move in the crisis. The loudspeakers crackled out over the discussions: "Comrades . . . ," then a call for five female volunteers to cook lunch for unspecified hundreds, announcement of a new march to the Renault factory in Boulogne-Billancourt, a request for blankets for the nursery, or medicines for the wounded — victims of police clubs and grenades — in the infirmary. In the large lecture halls of the ground floor, sessions of "permanent questioning" sat continually: on the future of culture, the role of women in the revolution, poetry and anarchy; while in the classrooms upstairs, "paritary committees" worked feverishly to formulate their vision of the future university. One sensed that what was once the amorphous and atomized mass called the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of Paris had become a great community, diverse, often divergent, but moved by a feeling of urgency and joy in the creation of a new order. As one student painted on the wall on May 23: ALREADY TEN DAYS OF HAPPINESS. The Cultural Revolution was a Happening, but a Happening that would perpetuate itself into the Reign of Imagination. Already, it had exploded into the body politic, throwing into question all the established hierarchies, all the commonplaces about authority and expertise, their control and exercise. The future was etched in the phrase TOUT EST POSSIBLE.

Where did this cultural revolution come from? What did it mean? What may be its future resonances, now that the Sorbonne posters have been turned into expensive art books, and the May days of 1968 assimilated to a folkloristic rite of a type which the bourgeoisie may — occasionally — permit itself as a supplemental luxury?

It is in accordance with the classical dynamics of revolution that everything should have started in the most advanced and relatively liberalized sector, at the new suburban campus of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences at Nanterre. Even physically, Nanterre makes manifest the contradictions which set a revolution in motion: a concentration of factory-modern steel and glass buildings rising in the midst of

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a no-man's-land of tarpaper-hut slums and raw, unfinished lowcost housing, it is one of the first French experiments in the creation of a campus. A campus without amenities, without even a library, yet enclosed like a campus: a machine without any escape valve, where students are required to keep residence, while the professors, who often appear only long enough to teach their classes, would not dream of doing so. The first "troubles" at Nanterre came with the start of the academic year in November, 1967, with a strike in protest against the impossible conditions created by the so-called "Fouchet Reform." This was in essence an arbitrary and authoritarian reform of studies superimposed on a complex, archaic structure whose main advantage was the anarchic liberty it gave to students. Notably, attendance at *travaux pratiques,* the equivalent of work in "sections," was made obligatory, without a concomitant provision of adequate staff to teach the swollen sections.

Since Nanterre had a liberal dean in Pierre Grappin, and probably the youngest and most progressive faculty in France, attempts were made to meet the students' demands, in terms of organization of *travaux pratiques,* increased faculty-student contacts, liberalization of parietal hours. But the dynamics of student protest in the compressed, airless atmosphere of Nanterre were already producing more politicized and militant groups, those who were to be dubbed the *enragés,* a label they gleefully accepted: first the *Comité Vietnam,* dedicated to the fight against American imperialism, then Daniel Cohn-Bendit's *Mouvement du 22 Mars* (named for the date the students occupied the administration building) which sought to radicalize the student body. They demanded the use of university facilities for political activities, won certain concessions, demanded more, sought to block the machinery of academic officialdom, to make apparent through their ridicule the absurdities and contradictions of the system. March 22 was followed by a temporary suspension of courses by the Dean. After spring vacation, Cohn-Bendit organized a series of "anti-imperialist days"; the first brought a measure of disorder as the neo-fascist Occident Movement counter-demonstrated. Nanterre was closed, and Cohn-Bendit and other "agitators" ordered to appear before a university disciplinary committee in Paris.

With Nanterre closed, everything was quickly transposed to Paris, to the Sorbonne where, on May 3, *22 Mars* and other "revolutionary" groups organized a demonstration in support of the students facing disciplinary measures. The Occident Movement announced it would counter-demonstrate. Jean Roche, Rector of the Sorbonne, somehow decided that a clash was imminent; he lost his nerve and called in the police to clear the Sorbonne courtyard — which they did with a ven-

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geance, loading the demonstrators into paddy wagons. Here was a clear violation of sacred ground, the Sorbonne courtyard, by Authority in its ugliest guise, the police; there followed the first demonstration in the Latin Quarter, the arrest of several demonstrators, who were given up to three months in prison, and the closing — for the first time in its history — of the Sorbonne. The students, supported by a number of professors, responded with a strike. The Latin Quarter was invested by police, Garde Mobile and CRS (*Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité,* tough riot-control troops) speeded from the provinces. Monday, May 6, the demonstration began with the cry of "Liberate our comrades"; it was quickly surrounded by the police, and the inevitable clash of violence followed. The government, with Prime Minister Georges Pompidou in Afganistan and President de Gaulle closeted to study Rumanian, could offer nothing better than denunciations of "foreign agitators." The lockout of the Sorbonne continued; the arrested students were still in prison. And on the night of Friday to Saturday came the first Night of the Barricades, open war between the forces of Order and the forces of Adventure, a night which had the resonance of 1830, 1848 or any of those dates of heroism and violence when French regimes collapsed under pressure from the Street.

THE BARRICADE BLOCKS THE STREET BUT OPENS THE WAY, proclaimed one of the Sorbonne graffiti. That night of May 10-11 completed the process of giving the students both an enemy and an army. From the moment the government had recourse to the police, the political "groupuscules" were no longer alone; the student movement had begun to gain cohesion. It was a cohesion born of solidarity with the imprisoned comrades and also the union of sport: especially the night of the "long march" on May 7, when the students traipsed thirty kilometers through Paris bringing their salute to all different quarters, there was a sense of play, of joyous camaraderie, of release from competition and tension. The barricades, too, had an element of play, as sociologist Edgar Morin pointed out: they were a mime of the famous historical gestures.[1] But that night of May 10-11, when the students faced the helmeted and shielded CRS chanting CRS,SS! and singing the *Internationale,* formed teams to rip down signposts, overturn cars, dig up cobblestones and erect a fortress on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, saw the creation of a real community where before there had been an amorphous and only marginally politicized mass. The attack of the forces of Order achieved what may have been begun by Anarchists, Maoists and Trotsky-

1. See Morin *et al., Mai 1968: La Brèche* (Paris, Fayard, 1968).

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ites, but never could have been completed by them: it turned the students into revolutionaries for whom the insurrectional gesture would become normal. As they retreated step by step before the barrage of tear gas and shock grenades and fell beneath the police clubs, when, especially, they were piled into police vans and taken to Beaujon Prison, made to run the gauntlet between two rows of police who tripped them and beat them when they fell, when they spent a night and a day in a crowded cell, without food, water or first aid, when girls were stripped and beaten in the streets, apartments were invaded and ransacked by the police, there was no longer any question of being "apolitical." A real solidarity was born, a movement that had discovered the repressive nature of established authority, and now knew the power of the crowd in the street, and the romance of power.

A new impetus and direction emerged: up to the night of May 10-11, the student's demands had been simple and immediate: release our comrades, call off the police, reopen the Sorbonne and Nanterre. These were virtually granted by Pompidou on his return from Afganistan, the evening of the 11th. But already plans were underway for Monday, May 13, the day of the general strike, when the massive Communist-led trade union, the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) and the Communist Party, which had at first denounced the student demonstrators as "adventurers" and ludicrous "groupuscules" — serving notice that there could be no alliance between official party Communism and intellectuals inspired by Maoist, Trotskyite or Castroist models — under pressure from their younger members announced that they would join in a mass demonstration to protest the brutality of the police repression. UNEF — the *Union Nationale des Étudiants de France,* the largest student union, though much weakened in recent years by serious internal divisions — was founded on an ideal of *ouvriérisme,* on a dream of alliance between manual workers and the progressive forces among the intellectuals inspired by Maoist, Trotskyite or Castroist models — under Jacques Sauvageot, along with Alain Geismar of SNE Sup. (*Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Supérieur,* a teachers' union) and Cohn-Bendit turned in calling for a solidarity of workers and students against the police state. The results exceeded their dreams: well over half a million people went into the streets of Paris on May 13, marching under the red flag to the strains of the *Internationale.* Suddenly there dawned a real possibility of a union of students and workers that could create an irreversible movement to destroy the old order.

What happened on the evening of May 13 was, in retrospect, perhaps the single most significant gesture of the whole incredible month.

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As the mass of demonstrators reached the Place Denfert-Rochereau, the official terminus of the march, the order to disperse was given, and most of the workers, firmly directed by CGT militants, did so. Large groups of students, however, refused to disband, and continued on to the Boulevard Montparnasse shouting that they were going to march on the Elysée. Police cordons blocked the bridges to the right bank; a parley ensued, the student leadership prevailed over the hotheads, and the march was transmuted into a mass meeting on the Champ de Mars. And it was here, as the students debated what to do with their movement, that someone pronounced the inspired word: occupy the Sorbonne. The police had been withdrawn from the Latin Quarter, the occupation was performed peacefully, and the first night of the Cultural Revolution began.

This act determined the course of future events, not only for the student movement, but for the nation. Because if the students had borrowed a gesture from the workers' tradition — especially the famous sit-down strikes of 1936 — the workers needed this example to rediscover the gesture for themselves. The next day, the workers at the Sud-Aviation plant near Nantes occupied their factory and announced an unlimited strike. Then Renault followed, first in the Cléon plant, then at Flins, then at Boulogne-Billancourt. Then came Rhodiaceta at Lyon, then the technicians and journalists of the state radio and television. The students reacted immediately: workers were invited to the Sorbonne and the other occupied faculties to join in debate on the future of the crisis and the future society; a student delegation was dispatched to bring a fraternal salute to the strikers in Boulogne-Billancourt. As the whole economic life of France moved toward paralysis, and the students threatened a march to join the strikers in the television studios, the government took fright: the evening of the 16th Pompidou went on the air to warn that the Republic was in danger, and that it would be defended. More busloads of CRS moved into the capital; and the strikes spread.

And so the student revolt was transformed into a potential social and political revolution. If this showed the remarkable success of the student movement, it may also have meant its downfall, at least in the short run. Because the two organizations that officially speak for the workers, the CGT and the Communist Party, never really wanted a revolution. The Communists were hostile from the outset to the students, who were in revolt against all established authorities and hierarchies, whether of the Right or the Left, and threatened the Party's claim to be the exclusive spokesman for the revolutionary proletariat. Further-

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more, "objectively" (as Communist doctrinaires like to say), Gaullist foreign policies are quite acceptable to the Party, and the dangers of a seizure of power in complicity with the "groupuscules" and in necessary alliance with the Socialists might be greater than its advantages. The CGT and the Party moved to alliance with the students only under pressure from intellectuals and younger workers in their ranks, and only when they saw possibilities for exploiting the movement, and perils in not doing so. Throughout the crisis, the CGT and the Communist Party operated basically on three principles: to answer worker unrest by using the protest unleashed by the students to their own ends; to "recuperate" the protest by channeling it into purely professional demands: wages, hours, working conditions, union privileges in the factories; to preserve intact the traditional policy of "no enemies to the left" by playing as much as necessary at a revolutionary stance, which in turn meant attempting to isolate and disarm "extremist" and "irresponsible" elements like Cohn-Bendit — who had, to be sure, denounced them as "Stalinist slobs": the students were themselves lucidly aware of the danger of "recuperation" by the traditional organisms of the Left.

The government's policy was substantially similar: it knew that it could satisfy the union's demands with nothing more elaborate than money, and that satisfaction of these demands would allow it to isolate and ignore the students. The grand alliance of May 13 seemed virtually to have given way to a complicity between the official representatives of the proletariat and the government. The students, feeling themselves more and more isolated and betrayed, took to the streets again, and when news of the government's decision to bar Cohn-Bendit from France (against which CGT and Communists protested not a whit) reached them, and was followed by De Gaulle's "referendum speech," calling for a participation to be instituted by government fiat, and dismissing the student movement with disdain, the bloodiest night of all followed, the night of May 24, which saw barricades not only in Paris, but in Nantes, in Bordeaux, in Lyon and several other provincial cities, a night when many young workers, despite the CGT's directives, joined the students, and when the violence of the police reached a paroxysm verging on sadism. It was a night of collective trauma for Paris, but the two organizations with real power, the government and the CGT, went on as if nothing had happened, and over the weekend of the 25th and 26th negotiated the "Rue de Grenelle Protocol."

The CGT was satisfied, and all seemed over. But when union rep-representatives returned to explain the agreement to the workers in the factories on Monday, group after group, sector after sector, the workers

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shouted "Don't sign!" and voted to continue the strike. The young and discontented element at the "base," especially the group that has come of age with French prosperity of the fifties and sixties, clearly wanted more, a far more radical reapportionment of riches, and the CGT was again in danger of being outflanked to the left. A new revolutionary dynamic was indeed triggered by the rejection of the Protocol. Already on the evening of Monday, May 27, a new demonstration, disavowed by the CGT and the Communist Party but supported by the smaller, more flexible Christian Socialist CFDT, which throughout the crisis played to distinguish itself from the CGT and gain support among the young workers, and the *Parti Socialiste Unifié* (which alone among parliamentary parties had begun to talk revolution) gathered several thousand students and young workers for a march to the university stadium at Charléty, under the patronage of Pierre Mendès-France and André Barjonet, a former CGT militant who had just resigned in disgust at the union's reactionary policies. At Charléty, the stadium echoed to cries calling for the resignation, not only of De Gaulle, but also of Georges Séguy, chief of the CGT; and Barjonet announced, to fervent applause, "Today, revolution is possible." A new slogan came to the fore, the watchword of *Gouvernement Populaire*. Faced with the "Spirit of Charléty," as France settled into total paralysis with close to ten million workers on strike and the government appeared less and less capable of any gesture whatever, Communist Party and CGT once again moved to the left: the bright yellow Party posters plastered up every night now took up the call for a Government of the People. By Wednesday, May 29, chaos seemed to have come, as De Gaulle disappeared from the Elysée by helicopter and was lost for six hours, and the CGT unleashed a giant demonstration proclaiming "Government of the people" and "The factories to the workers," and Mendès-France met with François Mitterand to lay plans for a provisional government grouping all the forces of the Left.

What happened the next day confirms that a revolution is a manic-depressive phenomenon. No sooner had De Gaulle returned and castigated the opposition, the unions, the students, than the CGT took its forces back in hand and returned to wage and hour demands, while the Communist Party began preparing the elections. After four weeks of bungling, the government showed a certain genius for producing a Thermidor: CRS were sent to evacuate strike pickets from the oil refineries, gas stations were quickly resupplied, Parisians lined up to fill their tanks, then set out in hundreds of thousands for a three-day Pentecost weekend, creating epic traffic jams on the highways and leaving the students virtually alone in Paris to demonstrate once again, on Saturday,

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June 1, to cries of "Elections, Treason!" Put a tiger in their tanks, and you no longer have a tiger in the streets. Then it was relatively easy for the government to follow up with a White Terror: eleven "revolutionary" student groups outlawed (but not the Occident Movement, and not the sinister Committees for the Defense of the Republic), over a hundred and fifty foreign students suspected of having participated in demonstrations expelled from France, former OAS conspirators pardoned (part of a bargain struck for the guarantee of army loyalty during De Gaulle's mysterious helicopter journey of the 29th), and a grand electoral alliance formed on the principle of "no enemies to the right." Finally, excuses were found to recapture the faculties one by one.

Yet it is incontestable that the student revolt brought France to the brink of political revolution. And although political revolution failed, it is possible that a real revolution — which we can most validly call a cultural revolution — was given form and movement. To understand this, one must go back beyond the events, beyond the barricades and the revolutionary dynamic, to the "student condition" and the student demand.

WE DON'T WANT A WORLD WHERE THE GUARANTEE OF NOT DYING OF HUNGER IS TRADED AGAINST THE GUARANTEE OF DYING OF BOREDOM. The inscription on the Sorbonne's walls suggests the students' belief that modern capitalism has created a new "intellectual proletariat," a proletariat whose alienation from society is not a matter of wages and working conditions but of psychology and ideology. The workers are suspicious of students because they are "sons of bourgeois" who have never known hunger and insecurity. This is just the point: they are, on the whole, free from want, free from material insecurity, but this has been traded against necessary subservience to a social organization determined by the exclusive goal of productivity, a world where individual liberty and social justice — and in few places has this been more true than Gaullist France — have been subordinated to economic planning which takes as its all-important goal a five percent a year increase in the gross national product. It is not simply that the machine is master; we have passed beyond the Luddite stage, and it is now the machinery of economic planning, and the subordination of all other sectors of life to it, that must be smashed. And yet it cannot be smashed: the consensus of modern technological society, the new "social contract," is based on an understanding shared by workers, technicians, managers and capitalists that the dislocation of this delicate machinery would be a disaster for all. It is a true infernal machine because the guarantee of economic well-being reposes on the surrender of freedom.

"You have understood nothing about our movement if you do

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not see this: what swept across France — to the point of creating a power vacuum — was not the spirit of professional demands, nor the wish for a political change, but the desire for other relations among men." This judgment by the Inter-Disciplinary Committee of "Liberated Nanterre"[2] strikes to the center of the human condition created by the processes of modern industrial society (not capitalism only: bureaucratic state socialism provoked a similar response from the students of Prague): human relationships are deformed and alienated by recuperation within the "consensus" because their place, extent and nature are assigned by the demands of productivity and efficiency; the individual loses the power to change anything of substance, to feel that his life is an exercise of freedom. Desire, the key term of the Nanterre report, is "disarmed," repressed and falsified: play and pleasure are defined in terms of the "values" which promote commercial prosperity. Repression in the Marxist sense is doubled by repression in the Freudian sense. Hence Cohn-Bendit's original call for a revolt against "sexual alienation"; hence his insistence on the value of play, ridicule, "buffoonery," as forces which can show up the absurd contradictions of the system, and make the machine crack under the pressure of the human.

The students, the "unassimilated," have not yet entered the consensus. Yet they are on the verge of doing so: they are in fact undergoing a process of conditioning designed to assimilate them, and "disarm" their desires. The origins of the student revolt should be sought in the interplay of the three terms *university-culture-society*: the way a society uses its university to transmit and impose a cultural pattern which is essentially a conditioning to assure that society's future élites will participate fully in society, will accept its methods, goals and ethos. The university indeed holds a monopoly (and in France it is a state monopoly) of what is clearly the most important commodity in any advanced society — knowledge. It alone selects, informs, conditions and licenses those who will make the machine run. The body of future managers — the students — are as helpless as a real proletariat in the face of this process, and their helplessness is reinforced by their isolation from the real productive forces of society, their "ghettoization." Escape from the university ghetto cannot be sought in an alliance with the managerial class, which exploits the ghetto's isolation; the way out can only consist in a gesture of fraternity with those exploited by the managers, the other potentially revolutionary force, the workers —

2. A translation of a portion of this Committee's report appeared in *PR* (Fall, 1968).

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which explains the power of the myth of worker-student solidarity. And the university itself must be dislodged from its role as transmitter of the cultural ideology of the managerial class; it must be turned inside out and made to serve, not the dominating consensus of a wrong and sick society, but a radical questioning of the system that will eventually provoke an explosion of the ghetto into the rest of society.

The links among *university-culture-society* and the future managers' sense of themselves as a ghettoized proletariat explain in general terms the university's vulnerability. What makes the French university especially vulnerable, beyond the complete state centralization and hierarchization of the system, is the fact that the three terms are out of phase with each other: this lack of symmetry, as well as pointing up the "contradictions" of the apparatus, makes particularly clear the necessary interdependence and interplay of the three spheres. Gaullism, which is on the economic plane essentially an attempt at efficient modern management and rationalization of corporate capitalism, has not been able — indeed, until the Faure reform elicited by the student revolt, scarcely attempted — to rationalize and make efficient a university structure which has undergone no major change since the time of Napoleon, which reflects a nineteenth-century ideal of bourgeois culture, and is by any standard an inefficient servant of its society: it does not train the élites that modern capitalism needs; it continues to form the vast majority of its students in a nineteenth-century humanistic tradition based on the assumption that culture is both gratuitous and a privilege, a formula which equips them for being nothing but new incarnations and transmitters of traditional culture — that is, schoolteachers. And even this it does poorly, for, in distinction to the American tradition where in general all humanistic thought is oriented, directly or obliquely, toward pedagogy, that is to the renewal of our perceptions of culture and the reinvention of ways of transmitting it, French intellectual life is such that new ideas tend to turn in their own circle, outside the University or on its periphery, and rarely open onto a new pedagogy. Which is why the very humanism in which the University revels is so often made to seem so lifeless and irrelevant to the students. Despite their piety toward their classics, the French may reread them less than any other people: the classics are for them lifeless monuments, explicated for all time in the lycées and the faculties, and rendered literally unreadable thereafter.

The university, in its classic sense, and in the modern sense which, in the best of cases, the British and Americans give to it, has never really existed in modern France, except as an administrative abstraction:

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the University. Instead, there has been a totally centralized, rigidly hierarchical structure of faculties grouped into academies, plus a number of special parallel or peripheral institutes which were set up at various times in lieu of a real reform of structures. The conception of the university as a place where exponents of different disciplines work in some cooperative manner to initiate the young in a relatively coherent way into a major branch of human knowledge is foreign to the present French system of higher education, though it does exist in elaborate but desiccated form in the lycées. The French faculties have existed in a perfect vacuum, thanks to which each faculty resembles an ancient monster feeding on its own tail. Cross-departmental programs have been virtually impossible. New disciplines have penetrated only after extraordinary delays: Nanterre, opened two years ago, provided the first serious study of sociology. Virtually no foreign blood has been infused (one has to be a French citizen to compete for the *agrégation,* which has become close to a necessity to teach in the University), and young blood is exhausted by the system, especially the *doctorat d'état,* necessary to become a professor, a massively long and usually dreary dissertation in two parts which, in the humanities, takes a minimum of ten years, assuring that the bright young man, if he does not quit the system entirely, will be brainwashed into antiquity by the time he reaches a position of influence, will be ready to join the "mandarins" who control so many sectors of the university. The vacuum in which the faculties have lived is not to be confused with autonomy: every administrative or budgetary decision has always been referred upwards through the immovable bureaucracy of the Ministry of Education, and all teaching programs have been oriented toward, and deformed by, the series of competitive examinations — *baccalauréat, concours d'entrée* for the Grandes Ecoles, *agrégation,* etc. — which traditionally assured the state of selection of its governmental and cultural élites, and collaterally created a mass of unsuccessful students branded as failures and given no alternative avenues of study, no other useful diplomas.

The Napoleonic structure of the French University is the expression of a dream of a rational society, the consolidation and institutionalization of the French Revolution. It is based on the ideal of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*: a position in society shall depend, not on the privilege accorded by birth or wealth, but on one's superior performance in competition with one's peers. It is an egalitarianism defined as equality of opportunity, defined in turn by a controlled process of natural selection. Against the contrast of Old Régime France, such a conception seemed the real expression of the Declaration of the Rights of Man: to

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an early nineteenth-century liberal like Stendhal, for instance, *la carrière ouverte aux talents* symbolized all that the Revolution had liberated and Napoleon had consolidated. Evidently, such a conception seems undemocratic by the ideals of social democracy that were to develop later in the nineteenth century, and it is certain that the kind of selection worked by the series of examination hurdles throughout the educational system has eliminated those not born to culture: even today, workers' children constitute less than ten percent of the student body in the University. But what really made the Napoleonic system outmoded, I think, was the industrial revolution and the diversified complexity of modern capitalist technology: these have increasingly put in evidence the negativity of the Napoleonic selection, on the one hand its wasteful creation of *râtés*, on the other hand its production of an élite unequipped by the nature of its selection and formation to meet the demands of modern technology, and often doomed to a sort of "intellectual unemployment."

Modern technology can have no use for the abstract ideal of an élite — that is, an élite chosen for its all-around cultural beauty, its capacity to handle philosophical abstractions with grace, to improvise brilliantly on a given theme, its ability to cite the classic spokesmen for each position, and to write a dissertation in three parts. And this is what the university system essentially provided, at least in the pre-Faure Reform era: one can't yet judge what real changes the reform may effect. An *agrégé* could always feel himself part of an élite, since the *agrégation* commanded great abstract respect as a hurdle got over, but he spent two or three or four years preparing an exam designed to select schoolteachers for the Third Republic, which gradually ceased to bear relevance to that original purpose — to become rather a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for entry into university teaching — and which, if he was a specialist in French literature, meant spending most of his time preparing Greek and Latin texts, or if he was a physicist, preparing material dating from pre-1930's physics. An architect from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts spent years carefully copying Renaissance façades, and when faced with designing a factory tended to fall back on the most commonplace, and ugly, cost-per-square-foot solutions. Students at the very top of the pyramid, at the Ecole Normale Superieure of the Rue d'Ulm, have in recent years increasingly felt that they must spend their three years at Normale in preparation for another, less abstract institution like the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. It is no wonder that diplomas should have lost much of their value outside the university and civil service hierarchies, and that students

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should have complained that their education gave them no direct outlets into the productive spheres of modern society.

In terms of the student condition, all this has meant a system with very little opportunity for intellectual exploration, where one has been forced to continue to cultivate what one early committed himself to, and proved himself in by competitive exam. It has been virtually impossible to move horizontally from one discipline to another, difficult to gain instruction in new fields which ought to be influencing methods in one's own field, difficult to begin the study of new languages and new techniques. Creative teaching has been rendered impossible both by the massive overcrowding of facilities (manifest since the war, it has recently, with the arrival of the postwar demographic wave at college age, become outrageous) and structures which permit no dialogue. The traditional pillar of the structures is the chaired professor, who traditionally arrived three times a week (his teaching load of three hours a week is defined by a statute of 1840) to present his *cours magistral,* a bleakly specialized lecture proffering the sum of human knowledge about one of the texts selected (by some distant committee) for the exam on which depends *licence* or *agrégation,* then sometimes talked with the doctoral candidates under his direction for a few moments, then departed. Section work has been carried out by Assistants under impossible conditions — groups of up to a hundred, with that many papers to correct, low pay, utter dependence on the professor who is the Assistant's *patron,* who has power of life or death over his future career, who can, and often does, use a man — sometimes forty years old or more — as an intellectual flunky, even to the point of plagiarizing his research. Access to libraries is so difficult, their reading rooms so overcrowded, that the French student has to rely far too much on what is available in bookstores, on the eclectic formation of his own private library — including, inevitably, a large number of desiccated course outlines and manuals.

It is not surprising that such a system has reinforced, in the consecrated term, a student's alienation — from the university itself, from the culture it incarnates, from the class and the society that formed the culture. The alienation has often been unformed because uninformed, because the university has had so little hold on modern realities. This may in part explain why French students so avidly consume new ideas coming from outside the university — or from its peripheries, like Structuralism — why intellectual modishness is so prevalent. The need for autodidacticism is great, and here the phenomenon of the private library, the individual collection of what looks most attractive in the

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bookstores, plays an important role — and one of the modern traditions that has had the most immediate appeal is that of the intellectual revolutionary: Trotsky, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, Régis Debray. Their precept and example are not, as might be the case in America, defused, rendered anodyne by recuperation within the general university dialogue; on the contrary, their influence is direct, unmediated, and it enters a mentality trained to systematic, abstract philosophical thought (which remains the strength, if also the weakness, of French education) and particularly aware of Marxist analysis. The May revolt began among the humanists, in the Faculties of Letters and Social Sciences, that is, among those equipped with the most useless culture, yet also the most critical relation to culture, and the analytical tools for its critique; the intellectual revolutionary tradition, bringing a direct and dogmatic application of a known type of thinking to action, was clearly relevant to the creation of a revolutionary sense in this cultural proletariat. It is also notable that those who first touched off the revolt at Nanterre were often students of sociology, the most modern discipline the faculty has to offer, a new field relatively unencumbered by the weight of traditional culture — thus, for the students, a sudden breakthrough to contemporary forms of thinking.

When the French student becomes politicized, it tends to be within a framework of abstract philosophical analysis and Marxist dogmatism; it is nothing like the American student's moralistic and practical commitment to the civil rights or antiwar movements. This politicization very often results in pure futility, because of the futility of French political life itself. The fate of student unionism is instructive. UNEF, organized after the Second World War on the model of a trade union, was never able to gain the participation it sought in the management of university affairs — student centers, student restaurants, the *cités universitaires,* etc.; in its frustration at the lack of concrete responsibilities, it became increasingly politicized. It indeed reached its peak of prestige and membership as a consequence of the Algerian War, during which it took a militantly anti-governmental position. The government at one point tried to woo UNEF and depoliticize it; when this failed, it cut off UNEF's subsidy and tried to work with the ostensibly "apolitical" FNEF, which in fact has mostly grouped rightist elements and never gained any real power. But during and after the Algerian War, UNEF's power was already passing in large part to the *Union des Étudiants Communistes,* which was for a time an intensely vital organism grouping the Party's young intellectuals around the periodical *Clarté,* which proposed a far more liberal line than *L'Hu-*

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manité — with the inevitable result that the Party finally purged UEC and liquidated *Clarté* in 1965. With the smash of UEC and the weakening of UNEF, the most politicized students gradually formed into the revolutionary "groupuscules" — the *Fédération des Etudiants Révolutionnaires* (Trotskyite), *Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire* (Castroist-Guevarist), *Union des Jeunesses Communistes Marxistes-Léninistes* (Maoist), *Mouvement du 22 Mars* (Anarchist), etc. — which, though hardly so powerful and influential as the government tried to make out, undoubtedly played a catalytic role in the May revolt.

In general, then, against French bourgeois society and the University it controls, both still infected by a nineteenth-century concept of privilege, and of culture as privilege, the students, who abstractly conceived are those who are being trained to assume the privileges, have become a ghettoized proletariat feeding on a myth of revolution. Their relation to the culture distributed by the society they are being conditioned to enter is one of unease, alienation, rejection. The self-conscious core of this paradoxical proletariat has forged the tools for a critique of the system (inadequate tools perhaps, but that only makes the critique more unsubtle, hence more revolutionary) and the rest of the students have had sufficient grievances in the inefficient functioning of the University to make the creation of a mass revolt easy — a revolt against the university, against its culture, against the dominating class of society. After all, they have nothing to lose but their relatively useless diplomas. And this is what happened, first at Nanterre, then at Paris: a revolt which began as an attack on the University's administration of culture rapidly passed through this representation of society to attack society itself.

The sclerosis of the University had not gone unperceived by progressive observers both without and within its walls, and in fact an intelligent critique of the system, and a number of concrete proposals of reform, were articulated in 1966 at the Colloquium of Caen (the second such meeting — the first was convoked by Mendès-France in 1956) which brought together academics, government bureaucrats and representatives of management. The "Fifteen Points" of Caen were, in retrospect, probably not visionary enough, yet their institution would have done major good. It clearly would have been in the interests of the Gaullist image of modern France to institute them, despite the high financial cost: its utter failure to enact a real reform of the University, which had clearly been moving toward crisis since the Liberation, must be to the eternal discredit of the Fifth Republic, even if it manages to capitalize effectively on its crisis-born reform bill. That it did not attempt

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reform before the crisis came is in fact somewhat typical: despite the image of modernism that it projects, Fifth Republic France is a maze of contradictions between new efficiency and dynamism and the preservation of archaic structures and privileges. The Gaullists argue that, despite the government's virtually unlimited political powers, the Fifth Republic simply has not had the strength, in terms of economic power and popular support, to impose far-reaching structural reforms; and it is unquestionable that any talk about University reform over the past years has met with immediate resistance from within the University itself, from the enchaired and entrenched professors, from such organizations as the *Société des Agrégés,* which regards any modification of that sacred institution, the *agrégation,* as a rape of French culture bound to assure the immediate collapse of French grandeur. Yet I think it can fairly be said that the Gaullists lacked not so much economic strength and popular support as imagination, interest, new ideas and daring: they waited ten years before getting around to their heralded *année sociale,* then promulgated by decree a reform both timid and retrograde.

The same is true in the domain of University reform, where the Fouchet Plan, it was clear from the start, could only be a disaster. With its new intermediate diplomas, its earlier specialization, its further hierarchizations, its new requirements for attendance at *travaux pratiques,* the Fouchet Reform meant infringement on students' traditional liberties with no real compensations in terms of reformed structures, for it didn't really touch structures; it seemed a new and vexing paternalism in the guise of efficiency, and it raised the specter of further "Malthusianism" in the system, further selection and elimination both within the Faculties and at entrance into them. Tocqueville said that the Old Régime was too authoritarian for its complexities; the Fouchet reform, by imposing arbitrary authoritarianism upon a complex system whose principle virtue was the liberty it gave to students, set off the revolution.

What I have said about the inadaptation of the French University and the culture it diffuses to the modern economy should suggest why there has always been a basic contradiction, a necessary contradiction, in the student protest, and why it is more complex than the student attack on the efficient and inhuman brain factory of Berkeley. On the one hand there are the students who complain about the lack of practical orientation of their education, the scarcity of job openings for the graduate, the failure of diplomas to guarantee proficiency in particular fields, the wasteful creation of failures with no useful achieve-

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ments: in general this, like the Caen Colloquium, is a call for the University to put itself into phase with modern society and advanced cultural models. On the other hand are the students, less important numerically, but more articulate at moments of crisis, who refuse the University's role as servant of the bourgeois capitalist state, who reject the idea of selection of élites, and repudiate the possibility of a University organized along more "productive" lines, with better channels of communication to industry and modern management. If they recognize the need for a rational reform of the University, they did not fight the battle of May merely to see the University better adapted to a sick society. They propose rather to sever the links between *university–culture-society,* to make the university and its culture out of phase with society and society's culture in a new, progressive, revolutionary manner. To them, the University should be the privileged scene of the Cultural Revolution, of a continual calling into question of the ideologies of the bourgeois capitalist state, the cell from which will come the forces that will eventually destroy capitalism and its culture. What they want is the institution of a kind of anti-university or counter–university within the University: what they have named the "Critical University."

The student movement, then, was from the start built over a gap between the reformists and the revolutionaries, between the desire to move more efficiently into the knowledge required to exercise the managerial function and a general *non serviam.* After the Student Commune had taken form and gained cohesion, the problem of its leaders was to keep the gap from becoming a real split, to maintain the spirit of revolution as an ongoing force that would not be satisfied by mere reformism, yet at the same time to produce the needed concrete results in the domain of university reform. *Tout commence en mystique, tout finit en politique,* said Péguy. The student movement was subject to the demands of both *mystique* and *politique,* and the solutions it proposed, or rather discovered, seemed for a time to turn the contradiction into a strength, to raise the problem to a new dialectical synthesis. The solution was adumbrated in a series of inspired decisions on May 13: after their occupation of the Sorbonne (followed by occupation of virtually all the faculties of France), the students' first move was to declare the autonomy of the "free universities," their second to make this autonomy real by putting in place a new power structure: committees of occupation and, more important, working committees in each discipline charged with creation of the new university: with elaborating, not proposals for a future discussion or negotiation, but new constitutions

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for every university domain. The cry was, in effect, "All power to the soviets."

Better than any other form of organization, the soviet structure synthesizes the revolutionary demand for seizure of power and the reformist demand for immediate practical results. It institutes at once an era of new social relations: the soviets were constructed on the principle of "paritary committees," with an equal representation of students and teachers (mostly the younger teachers, *Assistants* or *Maître-Assistants,* many of the chaired professors having "emigrated" for the duration) or else "mixed committees," chosen from a common slate of students and teachers. A soviet calls on the direct participation of everyone concerned by a problem, maintaining revolutionary spirit and solidarity while working, within its delimited domain, toward the most concrete results. A soviet is, as linguists say of certain statements, "sui-performative," in that it directly, without mediation, takes power into its hands, and because its decisions have immediate value as action. And in the new University willed by the soviets, the soviet principle was to be perpetuated, since the "Critical University" was to be founded on the unit of the department, conceived as the basic cell, a continuing soviet where students and teachers would manage their affairs, plan their programs, distribute their budget, elect their chairmen and in some cases even hire their personnel.

Other points common to the formulations of most of the soviets included: autonomy of the universities from the state, self-rule by bodies representative of students, teachers and administrators, which would elect deans, rectors and so on; elimination of the *agrégation* and similar national competitions; breakdown of the isolation of faculties and the compartmentalization of disciplines; democratization of higher education and the opening of the University's gates to workers in a massive program of adult education. In reaction against the hierarchization and caste stratification of the old order, where power was vested in the hands of a few mandarins and both the structures of the teaching corps and the relation of teachers to taught reflected a society of caste and exploitation, the Critical University proposed equality (abolition of distinctions of rank among teachers), revision of the relation between master and disciple (elimination of the *cours magistral* and the institution of dialogue) and an end to the "irresponsibility" of the mandarins through a Rousseauist social contract. Learning, according to several of the committee reports, is essentially founded on a contract between teacher and taught, an agreement to work together in a given field of knowledge according to certain methods, observing

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certain ground rules, employing certain vocabularies, submitting to certain controls. Hence the contract passed between teacher and students would specify the form and matter of *contrôle des connaissances*: exam, reports, papers. And the contract would also guarantee the students' right to establish "counter courses" wherever they felt the teaching to be biased or incomplete. Dialogue, argument, criticism would thus be institutionalized at the center of the Critical University, now become not a microcosm of the world outside, but a laboratory for forging the world to come. The inalienable right of the Critical University would be the *droit à la contestation,* the right to call everything into question, to make the apprenticeship of culture a revolutionary experience in permanence.

Not since the Middle Ages had the French faculties been so alive as they were in May and June; never, perhaps, had students and teachers worked so hard and so passionately to give themselves an education. And the work accomplished by the soviets was remarkable in many domains, both on the most practical level — proposing reform of the antiquated and mandarin-dominated structure of medical schools and teaching hospitals, for instance — and the most "utopian": as in architecture, where the reforms elaborated by the committees at Beaux-Arts aimed not only at reorganization of the whole architectural profession (controlled by a reactionary closed corporation which has made modern French architecture one of the least creative in the world) but also at a revolution in the culture of design, in the sociology of urbanism, a visionary blueprint for the creation of the future City. In the best of the soviet reports one sensed a synthesis of the practical reorganization and the visionary revolutionary project: a real synthesis, because education could be the meeting place of realistic apprenticeship and vision in an experience of constant questioning, criticism, awareness.

There were some problems that the soviets were not really able to solve, especially the particularly difficult related questions of selection, examinations and degrees, which together form a complex that represents everything the student insurgents detest: the choice and conditioning of future capitalist élites from the mass of the young. With the occupation of the faculties, one of the students' first moves was to abolish exams altogether, to the bewilderment of most of the "reformist" professors who did not see what exams represented to the students: the principal rite of passage into the adult world they reject. The professors countered with the old principle of *la carrière ouverte aux talents,* the contention that democracy is based on competitive selection and that its elimination would mean return to an Old Régime

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system of privilege, the advancement of the rich and well-connected. It was easy for the students to reply that the present selection operates in similar fashion, that it favors those born and brought up in a milieu where culture is respected and cultivated. But the student objection went further: they had a vision of democracy as a continuing series of chances and options with reorientations rather than definitive eliminations. The Critical University should train people to regard definitive solutions with suspicion, to remain psychologically free to revolutionize their lives. If this implies that exams should become as much as possible simple "controls of knowledge" rather than eliminatory competitions, and that diplomas should be simple certificates of studies accomplished rather than abstract decorations of merit, the institution of this phase of democracy would evidently be more difficult to achieve than those concerning university administration and teaching programs: it indeed would depend less on the University than on a future revolution in secondary and primary education.

In the space of a few weeks, the soviets declared a reform of the University more radical and positive than anything undertaken since the original French Revolution. Of course, however, nothing they did ever had any technical legality: that still belonged to the state, and to the government as controller of the budget; and for some time it looked as if the governmental response was going to take the exclusive form of police oppression. Then came Edgar Faure's reform bill, a remarkably progressive document which, if loyally applied, could prove strong enough to defuse the protest movement by satisfaction of the reformists and consequent isolation of the revolutionaries. In broad outline, the Faure Reform grants autonomy to the universities — which are to become real universities rather than structures of isolated Faculties — accepts the principle of student participation in their governance and guarantees the right of political debate and student organization on campus. All of this is necessary and promising, but it has been formulated in very vague terms. Autonomy, for instance, could mean little if the Ministry of Education were to keep tight control over the budget — and, although Faure pushed through, over the opposition of Gaullist reactionaries, the stipulation that university budgets would receive only *ex post facto* audit by the Ministry, and universities are now allowed to do their own fundraising for special projects, it is unclear to what extent the universities will be able to gain the strength and financial independence necessary to real autonomy. The modalities of student participation — and also the participation of junior faculty — in running the universities must also be clarified. Steps have been taken

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toward redefining the *agrégation* and the doctorate, but they are probably insufficiently radical. Most promising was Faure's plan for several new experimental institutions in the Paris suburbs, which were to mix disciplines, define their own programs, recruit special faculties (including some foreigners all unprovided with the *agrégation*) — but this experiment may succumb, at least temporarily and in part, to the battle of the franc. In fact, the drastic budget cuts of the new austerity program tend to jeopardize all of Faure's progressive projects.

At the moment, the University is necessarily in a twilight zone of uncertainty as to what its reform really means, what new structures will really come into existence and perhaps especially, what difference reform will create in the student condition. Although a fringe of the radical left continues agitation, and calls forth dire threats of repression from the Ministry of the Interior, nothing decisive is likely to emerge for some time. Certainly the brave new world instituted by the soviets last spring is not an immediate possibility. Yet a return to the full despair of the old order also seems precluded, because, although the political revolution failed, a revolution of mentalities was set in motion, and is probably continuing in muted, local forms. That is, for those who lived the Reign of Imagination in May, 1968, the old ways of doing things — which in France has traditionally meant the surrender of power to bureaucratic hierarchies — no longer seems completely tolerable; they have substituted for the old ways a new sense of the possibility of direct local initiatives, and where this is given some scope — as it is within the present fluid, twilight-zone University — it may promise something of new value.

The May Revolution was in intent an anarchist revolution, renewing a deep-rooted French tradition reaching back to Rousseau and most fully voiced by Proudhon, a tradition which sees the power of the people expressed, not, as in Marxism, through state ownership of the means of production, but through direct ownership and management of the tools of their profession by workers of all categories. This tradition of "creative anarchy" is based on an historical mistrust of the state as the inevitable betrayer of the social contract, on a desire to reorganize the economy and society in such a way that power is never alienated from those directly concerned by its exercise. Cohn-Bendit and other student leaders, and the anonymous authors of hundreds of tracts distributed in May, all manifested a lucid mistrust of totalitarian state socialism, where the state's technological apparatus would infringe individual liberty as much as does capitalism, and proposed instead the direct communism of anarchy, based on the anti-hierarchical, anti–

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technological, anti-organizational form of authority and human solidarity represented by the soviets. Indeed, the Napoleonic centralization and hierarchization of the French state — of which the University's structure is a faithful reflection — makes France more immediately vulnerable to an anarchist revolution than to a classic Marxist revolution: the average citizen's experience of the state is one of intolerable bureaucracy. The slogan "Nationalize the factories," taken up during the crisis by the CGT and the Communist Party, is traditional Marxist doctrine, but it does not mean much to the workers since so many of them already work for nationalized sectors — the railroads, the coal mines, Renault, Sud-Aviation — which have merely transferred private capitalist practice into the public sphere, and given the proletariat no new status. The revolutionary cry, which the demonstrators shouted despite union directives, is "The factories to the workers." This is the true echo of 1848 or 1871, and it was at the origin of the movement of strikes and occupations which followed the example given by the students at the Sorbonne: the movement began outside the union framework, with workers (particularly the young ones) grouping themselves into action committees, raising the red flag over their factory and demanding, not simply higher wages and shorter working hours, but "worker power" in the factories. It was only after the initial moves had come from the "base" that the strike movement was taken in hand by the CGT and channeled into classic wage and hour demands.

Edgar Morin was able to claim that the students set up the first working communism in a western democracy: they expropriated the means of production and instituted the communal exercise of power. As the crisis developed, the concept of the "action committee" became central, not only in the University and the factories, but in the state radio and television, in the cinema, in the arts and letters, even in residential neighborhoods: groups began forming, to discuss the crisis and prepare future "direct action" which was often undefined in character, sometimes given form in a program, but always directed to an expropriation of power from the traditional hierarchies of management, its redistribution to those directly concerned by its exercise, rejection of the conception of representation as the delegation of responsibilities in favor of direct assumption of power. The most remarkable instance was the ORTF, the state television and radio services, where the journalists and technicians unilaterally declared the independence of their organism from the state, gave it a new structure and a new statute.

That is, while political revolution failed, and led to inevitable reaction, the future of a real revolution was drafted in the spontaneous

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forms of action discovered by the insurgents. We could call this real revolution a cultural revolution because it has to do with changes in mentalities, ideologies and language, with mental structures and categories, and finds first expression in those groups professionally concerned with mentalities, with culture and communication. The political revolution that seemed so close on May 29 and 30 did not take place in large measure because there was no political solution possible, given the present condition of the French political left. But in a modern industrial society, the point is less one of the party in power, or even the form of the régime, than of the organization of labor, the distribution of technological power, the control of information and publicity: "who rules" is a question that can be answered outside the political structures. The students symbolized this in one of their earliest demonstrations, in a march where they passed the *Assemblée Nationale* without even so much as stopping, but went on to the offices of *Le Figaro,* that daily dispenser of the platitudes of French bourgeois culture, shouting *"Le Figaro contre nous!"* Another goal frequently set for marches was the ORTF: the "right to information" was one of the students' major themes, and they early demanded an hour of television time a week to bring their cultural revolution to the people. Throughout the crisis, they emphasized the need to explain what they were doing and what they wanted, to workers in the factories, to journalists, to anyone who would listen. The reporters of the independent "peripheral" radio station, Radio-Luxembourg, which provided excellent direct coverage of the month's events, were welcomed as heroes in the student camp. And it is unquestionably in the communications field that the students evoked the most profound response: at the ORTF, among film makers, writers, directors of theatrical troupes (some of which organized performances in the factories during the strikes), directors of the *Maisons de la Culture,* journalists.

It would of course be an error to confuse the artistic avant-garde with the revolutionary avant-garde — the former has too often shown itself reactionary in politics. The point is rather the creation of a critical attitude toward the totality of our cultural assumptions, in education, communications, art and so on, a new test of the validity and relevance of the "values" which existing society has utilized or fabricated for its self-perpetuation. Here, the "Critical University" could evidently be a real revolutionary force, as could a freed television in ferment, new experiments in the theater and the cinema, in the programs of the *Maisons de la Culture* in the working-class suburbs. Such a cultural revolution would already implicitly be the "anarchist"

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revolution because it would mean the insurrectional seizure of the power of the word — the power of the intellect and the power of communication — by those who did not previously wield it, the expropriation of established cultural hierarchies.

What the students did for a time clearly achieve — with the turmoil of communications media, with the proliferation of flamboyant tracts composed, mimeographed and distributed almost instantaneously, with the stark and beautiful posters produced by the *"atelier populaire"* of Beaux-Arts, perhaps most of all with the graffiti which appeared on walls everywhere to give voice to the individual's participation in the new order of things — was a redistribution of the power of the word, and of the word as power. They seized and exercised a language which had belonged to the "others," to the forces of alienation, to the government, to official sources of information, to propaganda and advertising, gave it a new vitality and originality and made it serve imagination in power. If several of the soviets' reports talked about effecting an "accession to language" of a proletariat which has historically always been dumb and let others speak for it, this is because they felt a new movement was seeking articulation — an articulation which has nothing to do with ballots, at least for the time being, but could be the basis for a future cultural revolution to end alienation and repression — in the Freudian as well as the Marxist senses — by a reconquest of the power of expression, its redistribution to those from whom it had been taken away, or to whom it had never been granted. Already, during the May crisis, one felt a certain reconquest of the city by the citizens: every morning after the nights of protest and violence, groups of people would gather on the sidewalks or in the devastated streets to discuss the night's events, the future of the crisis, new solutions. The Latin Quarter became a vast forum. And this was a first satisfaction of the "desire" that swept across France in May, 1968, shaking "the edifice of exploitation, oppression and alienation."

Peter Brooks

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PRAGUE

At the end of August, when Russian tanks applied a powerful brake to Czechoslovakia's efforts to create a really humane system of democratic socialism, the attention of the world focused once again on that territory on which for centuries the small Czech nation has been buffeted by stronger and more powerful neighbors. The courage, high ethical standards and level of intelligence of the country, and particularly of its youth, were applauded.

But the world's interest waned when it became clear that the new Czech situation wasn't going to cause a world war, or lead to a new economic crisis. The little news that still appears is read with less and less interest. Possibly that's why only a very few seem to have noticed that the Czech struggle recently entered a new phase.

On Sunday, November 17, 1968 — a day which ought to be commemorated by students all over the world as International Students' Day, in honor of the nine Czech student leaders executed twenty-nine years ago by the German occupation forces, and the thousands of others dragged off to concentration camps from their closed universities — one of the most decisive plenary meetings of the Communist Party's Central Committee was held. The press reported that the authority of Alexander Dubcek, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, had been substantially restricted, that power was passing into the hands of centralists and that even Prime Minister Cernik and President Svoboda, two of the popular "foursome," had indicated they were willing to take up a more pro-Soviet position. The following day headlines announced the "End of Dubcek Era," and speculation was rampant — would Dubcek remain at his post or resign, whom will the Russians want to install next and where, what will happen in a month, a year, five years.

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But I would like to hope that the world will also take stock of what began to happen that same day away from the chess game of cabinet politics. On the initiative of the strike committee of Charles University's Philosophical faculty, thousands of Prague students staged a sit-in protest, the first to occur in this generation. Strike committees were quickly set up in all Prague faculties and a strike committee of the Union of University Students in Bohemia and Moravia appealed to all the Czech universities to follow their example. Sixty thousand students in Bohemia and Moravia went on strike and the Slovak universities were expected to join them very soon. The students were in close contact with all the factories in Prague as well as with several big factories in the country at large: all the workers endorsed their demands and a few hundred young workers went out on sympathy strikes. And more than 1,000 Prague journalists and Czech writers openly supported the students.

The demonstrators were protesting against attempts by pro-Soviet politicians to restore the pre-January conditions, and against the present Government's policy of compromise; they were also expressing their full support for that policy which since January has been associated with the name of Alexander Dubcek — the policy of "socialism with a human face," that is, of a democratic and humane socialism.

The strike changed the atmosphere in Prague. Despite the imposition of more and more restrictions, people were much more optimistic and cheerful than some weeks before. Their only hope, their faith in the youth, was confirmed.

But before dealing further with the present situation I must tell you more about the young people of Czechoslovakia, so you can really understand what is going on here. This generation, the first generation born in socialist Czechoslovakia, differs from its father's — young people often are different, and this is probably true all over the world. In Czechoslovakia, though, I feel there is something special about the youth.

The postwar generation has been given various labels in the past ten years: they've been called cosmopolitan, unpatriotic, cynical and so on. Toward the end of 1967, during the students' mass political actions, the campaign of abuse began to wane, primarily because the critics ran out of arguments; and after January, 1968, it was silenced altogether. Moreover, during the first week of the invasion the majority of journalists devoted a good deal of valuable space in the free newspapers (published clandestinely) to apologies to Czechoslovak youth for the suspicions voiced about them earlier, and to expressions of respect for their courage. Some newspapers, notably *Mladá Fronta,* went so far as to

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state that the developments had shown that the political standpoint of the young people, and their doubts about the quality of the relationship between the U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia, were basically correct.

The Czechoslovak youth today is one of the most politically-minded in the world, as the resolutions it passed and the positions it adopted, particularly last autumn, this spring and at the present time, show. Actions organized by them testify to an unusually mature, responsible and thoughtful approach to the issues at hand. This, of course, does not mean that all young people in Czechoslovakia are carrying old wise heads on their shoulders; they are merely products of their time, a time in which they have witnessed the rise and a fall of so many Personalities, Ideals and Ideas that they are necessarily skeptical of Programs. From the first, they've tried to think for themselves, and form their own program — an anti-program program, a program based on open-mindedness, not on a closed political conception. They are now in the process of probing and experimenting, and in their anxiety to avoid repeating their fathers' pattern, will probably keep on probing for a long time — which is all to the good. They are looking for values, from the present and from the past; they are returning to the classics and ignoring the "interpretations" — they are turning to the cultural values created by the Czechoslovak nation over the past years, regardless of the praise or censure accorded them by present-day politicians.

Czech youth rightly understands that Czech history contains many answers to today's questions. The past 1000 years have shown the nation alternating between relatively short periods of freedom and longer periods of subjugation and struggle against both foreign and domestic dictatorships; and Czech politicians have frequently been faced with a choice between compromising and fighting. Too often compromise was a synonym for a capitulation which would bring the nation to the verge of extinction. The fathers of Czech policy stated that between aggressive Germany and Tsarist Russia the Czechs could not survive as a free and political nation without strong allies. They sought an ally in the Habsburg monarchy. After the First World War, reliance was placed on the Western powers, primarily France; after the Second, the policy makers turned to the East. Since the nineteenth century, Czech politicians have been using the smallness of their country as an excuse for the smallness of their political conceptions, and even potentially great politicians have failed to rise above the situation at a time of crisis.

The philosopher Karel Kosík has posed the question: will the nation withstand pressure, or "will it give way and cease to be a historical sub-

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ject; will it disintegrate as a political entity and sink to the Czech or Slovak speaking population producing steel and grain?" But this is not the Czech question, for the Czech question must be solved in its global context. Their present crisis has uncovered the roots of a European and world crisis, of which it is an indivisible part. There are wider implications here than those of international politics; for they must realize that their crisis cannot be solved in terms of politics — modern politics are characterized as manipulation of the masses. The Czech crisis can only be solved by eliminating the cause, that is, the system of universal manipulation.

In my opinion, the Czech people have a real possibility of finding an alternative, based on an entirely new conception of man, existence, nature, truth. Their possibility is based on the variety of experiences they are able to call upon: in a comparatively short period, Czechoslovakia has tried out in practice several kinds of theories — monarchy, bourgeois democracy, fascist dictatorship, Stalinism and a few months of democratic socialism. The youth especially have learned to appreciate the advantages of a socialist society. They are not interested in a return to prewar conditions, and they do not do what their fathers do — compare the present with a capitalist order, and therefore excuse the blatant mistakes and deformations of socialism. They compare instead the theory which they have been taught with the practice which, due to pseudointerpretations of Marxism, produces in the socialist countries today many of the features which Marx originally attacked in bourgeois society. For them, no doctrine goes unquestioned, nothing is sacred, no subjects are taboo.

Therefore, young people could logically fit August 21 and its consequences into their experience without suffering their parents' trauma, the feeling that the ground had slipped away from under their feet. So in the first days of the invasion they could paint swastikas into the Soviet star and cover the occupants' tanks with the same sign; so, after the publication of the Moscow agreements they could call out slogans like "A Second Munich." They stopped equating the Soviet Union with socialism a long time ago, and as the Prague graffitti demonstrated, they did not hesitate to draw comparisons:

"The Germans wanted us for a thousand years, the Russians for all eternity," "Once brothers — now murderers," "Cain was also a brother." "We survived occupation by our enemies, we shall survive occupation by our friends," "At last the Soviet Union has caught up with and surpassed all the imperialist countries," "When despots turn to terror, we can sleep easily: it is no deception."

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After President Svoboda's appeal to the people to recognize the necessity for the Moscow agreements and calling for unity and calm, a student paper published the speech made by General Jan Syrovy, then Prime Minister, on September 30, 1938:

> My highest aim, like everyone of you, is to preserve the life of the nation. We took over this obligation from the hands of our fathers who lived a harder life than we because they were not free. And we must fulfill this mission not only with love in our heart but also with clear heads. . . . We have had to choose between making a desperate and hopeless defence, which would have meant the sacrifice of an entire generation of adult men as well as of women and children, and accepting, without a struggle and under pressure, terms which are without parallel in history for their ruthlessness. We have been anxious to make our contribution toward peace and we have been willing to make it — but not in the way which we are constrained to do. We were deserted. We stood alone. . . . The most important thing is that unity and concord should reign amongst us, and that there should be no conflict within our ranks. . . . We depend upon you — you must trust us!

In the same issue the students printed a speech made by Klement Gottwald, the first working-class president, who laid the foundations of socialism in Czechoslovakia but also, in 1950, submitted to pressure from Moscow and gave his consent to the arrest and execution of his former colleagues. On October 11, 1938, Gottwald, then a Communist Deputy to Parliament, spoke to the National Assembly:

> . . . [T]he audacious aggression of the enemy was encouraged by the fateful capitulation of the Czechoslovak Government on 30th September. We declare to the nation and to the world that the Government had neither the constitutional nor the political right to capitulate. The army wanted to fight. The whole nation wanted to defend the country by all means. . . . It is not certain that the enemy would have launched a military attack if he had seen that he would meet armed defence on the part of Czechoslovakia. According to the aggressor's tactics one could assume that in such a case he would have not resorted to arms. . . . The world still does not know what unprecedented violence has been perpetrated on us, with what devilish subtlety the roots of our State and national life are being severed. This we must cry to the world every day, every hour, and all possible occasions. If anybody thinks that by passively looking on at what is happening he will incline the aggressor to mercy, he is cruelly deceiving himself and others. This aggressor knows no pity. We must demand of this Republic's Government — if it wishes to be called a real government — that it reject this flagrant interference in the Republic's internal affairs.
>
> The August invasion did not create conflict among the Czech

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youth; on the contrary, it helped to crystallize their political opinions and attitudes. Significantly, there were no young people among the groups of collaborators and pro-Soviet demonstrators on November 7, 1968, while the anti-Soviet demonstrators were nearly all young.

During their November strike the students sent to the Communist Party's Central Committee a ten-point resolution, the key demands of which are similar to those which were sent to Novotny's Government by assemblies of thousands of students last November and December:

1. The Action Programme adopted by the April plenary Central Committee must remain the foundation of Party policy.
2. There must be no return to cabinet policy, and the two-way flow of information between citizens and the leadership must be renewed.
3. Censorship of mass media must be temporary and be abolished within six months.
4. The right of assembly must be restored.
5. Freedom of scientific research and of literary and cultural expression must be guaranteed.
6. The personal security of every citizen must be ensured by law.
7. Those who have lost the confidence of the people and failed to clarify their standpoint must not be allowed to remain in important posts.
8. The establishment of self-managing workers' councils in factories must continue.
9. Freedom to leave the country must be guaranteed.
10. In foreign policy the country must take no action which violates the feelings of Czechoslovak people, the United Nations' Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights.

The differences between last year's and this year's resolutions are in form rather than in content. Last year the students couldn't use words like "renewed" or "restored" and so on. And that gives them hope. Once all these things were possible. Today the students do not feel that they have continually to emphasize that they are for socialism. One of their resolutions of early spring began with the words:

> Socialism in our country is a reality. For us a return to capitalism is unthinkable, because all the positive achievements of the past twenty years, in spite of the mistakes and shortcomings, stemmed from the socialist character of our society. Socialism is a classless society, therefore it means an end to irreconcilable class war. Answers to the question, what will our socialism be like, will obviously differ. Let them: for our socialism must be really enlightened, humanitarian and democratic. The basis of democracy is full recognition of and respect for human rights and freedoms as proclaimed in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which should be implemented primarily under socialism. . . .

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This resolution was not addressed to the student's ranks, for only those ignorant of the facts could suspect Czechoslovak youth of anti-socialist motives; they were addressed to people abroad, both East and West. During the past year the powers-that-be in the East and their fanatical followers in Czechoslovakia have shown very little understanding or even attempts at understanding what the youth really wants. They have preferred instead to seek arguments with which to prove a prefabricated theory about the existence of anti-socialist, Right Wing, counter-revolutionary forces. On this level discussion ceases to be discussion, and any kind of dialogue is an insult to the maturity of the Czech youth, who now ignore similar provocations from whichever side they have come.

Strangely enough many Western analyses concurred with those of the August 21 invaders. In London, Washington, New York — just as in Moscow — some people thought that the Right would prevail in Czechoslovakia, and despite the leaders' assurances, believed that they were looking for a way out of the friendly embraces of the socialist camp. Some journalists, after a while, saw that they had been mistaken. I'm sure Western Governments always had access to exact information and never doubted that Czechoslovakia was trying to create a new model of socialism. They realized that the more attractive it was, the more dangerous it would be — it would probably be the first system which could truthfully claim to represent the will of the people. The U.S.A. would very likely be reluctant to tolerate a Dubcek regime, should one appear in its sphere of interest, say in Latin America, any longer than the Russians tolerated it in Czechoslovakia.

Here it should be stressed that while the majority of Czechoslovak young people have for a long time drawn a distinction between socialism and the regime in Soviet Union, the invasion made the nature of an imperialist state painfully clear to them. Many admitted that the presence of Russian tanks in Prague brought home to them the injustice of the war in Vietnam. The American Government's wishy-washy attitude to the invasion of Czechoslovakia — which gave rise to the unpleasant suspicion that an unwritten agreement existed between the two biggest imperialist Great Powers — coupled with the Chicago events that so clearly discredited the American electoral system, could not evoke a favorable response among Czech and Slovak youth.

The feeling of isolation during this summer's events can be compared to that experienced by the older generation during Munich. In the socialist camp Yugoslavia and Rumania condemned the invasion, but both, particularly the latter made it very plain that although

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they deplored intervention in the internal affairs of another socialist country, they would not like to see similar reforms in their own country. The Czech people remained alone both from the military and political points of view. They did have, however, the moral support of many people in the West, and in the countries of their uninvited guests, where it of course required tremendous courage.

This feeling of isolation has been projected into the discussions — forced upon them by the general situation — about what was good and what was bad in the post-January policy. Their State and Party leaders accepted the "need" for such discussions without much protest. And these discussions show that young people are convinced of the necessity of creating a system which would differ from that in Moscow and that in New York.

The main conclusion drawn by the present generation from its twenty years' experience is that a system is necessary which would make it impossible for any group, large or small, to accumulate too much power in their hands and to enforce the narrow interests of a power group in the name of Party, people or nation, or in the interest of country, Communism, party unity or unity of the people. The concentration of power in the hands of individuals and the limited choice for the others between remaining silent or throwing in their lots with the governing dynasty are the common denominators of all the shades of social organization which have been imposed on them since 1948. The period from January to August of this year gave rise to the hope that a system such as the one envisaged by youth could be created. Recollections of the days when thousands traveled to Prague only for the purpose of signing a statement supporting their Government's policy, when people saw that their views could influence the basic formulations of the press and electoral laws — these and other reminiscences of the experiment which has been nipped in the bud before it could find the answers to all the outstanding questions are an inspiration to the students today as they ponder over the kind of society they want to fight for. It is already clear that it will be a long and strenuous struggle.

Today students are concentrating on a struggle to insure the basic civil and human freedoms which the April Action Programme proclaimed and promised to guarantee by law this fall. They regard the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights as one of the basic documents of their long-term program. Czech students are convinced that these freedoms are an inseparable part of socialism, because socialism, which should mean the total liberation of mankind and Man as an individual,

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must be humanistic; otherwise it is not socialism but an apron merely hiding various types of dictatorship.

Many of the political freedoms which students — and not only they — are demanding today existed during the First Republic, but the effects of economic crisis and the social inequality existing at that time necessarily lowered their value in the eyes of those who were affected. The bourgeois liberal system also paralyses the social effectiveness of political freedoms: for example, the freedom to criticise, so that it is more the exercise of a freedom than an effective social weapon.

They saw the other extreme in the past twenty years. They saw the introduction of social benefits accompanied by the restrictions of political freedoms. And those who evoked Marx on all occasions got into conflict with his doctrine, for Marx stated that "One form of freedom conditions another. Whenever a certain freedom is called in doubt, freedom altogether becomes doubtful."

The right of every citizen to have a say in decisions affecting his life, that is, in the administration of public affairs, in the management of society, is the second guarantee insisted upon by the students. Only a system which makes this possible can be called democratic. The Party's Action Programme at the very minimum created favorable conditions for democratic participation. It stated:

> Socialist State power cannot be monopolised either by a single party or by a coalition of parties. It must be open to all political organizations of the people. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia will use every means to develop such forms of political life as will insure the expression of the direct voice and will of the working class and all working people in political decision-making in our country. . . .

Following the Party's declaration, political clubs and organizations sprang up all over the country, particularly those founded by young people, which were to have been legalized by a new law on assembly and association this fall. These clubs formed the seed of a new political system. For students, in particular, believe that "a well organized network of interest and political clubs which act as pressure groups could be a better guarantee of socialist democracy than, for example, a plurality of political parties." The present policy, it seems to them, is a game of power and a game for power: since political parties are its instruments, a struggle between political parties inevitably turns into a mere struggle for power.

Thanks to the general experience of the past twenty years and to their own specific experience of disputes with the politically sterile Czechoslovak Union of Youth, which they had struggled for years to

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reform, students no longer feel that they can rely on a political organization. They still fear that in the existing political jungle the creation of a formal organization with a given, inflexible structure would mean that its political program too would soon become formal, narrow and restricted, and that the shaping of the program would get pushed upwards into the lobbying to the functionaries. Therefore they try to shape a broad political program through the activities of a number of loose and flexible groups among the rank and file of the student body.

The system of self-governing organizations as one of the pillars of the new society is one of the topics most frequently discussed at joint meetings of students and workers — for the students also believe that a political democracy of socialist citizens cannot exist without self-government by all productive institutions. One without the other must degenerate.

They know that just as last year they could accomplish a change in their own political representation by a movement from below by activating the mass of students, they can now achieve changes in society only by joining forces with other social strata, particularly with workers. Some years ago they attempted to make contact, primarily with young workers, but they were only partly successful. The governing bureaucracy used all its means to enclose the workers in their factories, the farmers in their villages and the intellectuals in their libraries, limiting their exchange to the minimum and rationing the information available to them. As a result, the workers stopped playing their political role as a class, this role being taken over by the bureaucracy ruling in the name of the working class. The set-up differed from capitalism only in that the system of universal saleability was replaced by the system of universal manipulation.

It should be emphasized that in the period of complete freedom of press and freedom of speech this spring and summer the clubs succeeded in providing a platform for the expression of their members' views and played a role as a corrective to the Communist Party's politics. This, no doubt, is why the dissolution of all organizations outside the National Front was one of the first Russian demands.

The demand was accepted by the leaders, and the clubs abolished. The existence of the Union of University Students of Bohemia and Moravia, a new students' organization which came into being in the spring when students left CSM (Czechoslovak Union of Youth) en masse, was threatened. In order to save the Union of University Students, the students agreed to start negotiations with the National Front,

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but the basis of the Union, self-governing student organizations loosely associated within the organization, has been preserved.

The students' aim is to create a democracy from the bottom, a democracy of producers; to create a system based on the conscious ability of the individual to exercise permanent control over society; to approach more nearly the old ideal, in that one's economic freedom would be enhanced by his spiritual freedom. This year's eight-month experiment has, in the eyes of the students, removed the Utopian tinge from these ideas and has given them the courage to take a stand against those in power.

Their three-day protest sit-in was the first step and it can be called successful. The students proved that they are capable of organizing a mass protest, of controlling their most violent feelings and moods and of preserving discipline and dignity under very complicated conditions. They succeeded in establishing close contacts with the workers of all the large factories, who, in turn, supported the students' ten-point declaration almost unanimously. The factories supplied the students daily with food and money. Several hundred young workers organized sympathy strikes in support of the students; the majority of older workers hesitated however, to take such a serious step as a general strike only because they thought the time was not yet ripe for it. Yet all factories blew their sirens one morning for fifteen minutes to show very clearly that they are on the students' side. And people in the factories are saying that although compromise may sometimes be necessary, limits must be drawn, that retreat is one thing and betrayal another, that their politicians are probably the best loved in the world, but that love demands fidelity and that if they keep on marking time they shall only dig a grave for themselves.

The students don't want to wait any longer: to remain silent in the face of a policy they no longer consider theirs would be to make a mockery of the very moral scruples and principles on which their new society must be based, a society where "genuine human relations between free beings" will be a matter of course. Their present attitude is reflected in the resolution adopted by an assembly of students and staff of the Philosophical faculty on the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of an independent Czechoslovakia:

> . . . [W]e regard the political reality of the present situation, that is the permanent presence of Soviet troops, as illegal in the sense that it is a violation of our Constitution, the United Nations' charter and the Warsaw Pact. No other term but occupation can be used to

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describe it. We are convinced that our views correspond to the sentiments of the people of our country. These views, however, were not respected by the Czechoslovak signatories of the Moscow protocol. We reject this agreement between Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R., just as we reject the agreement on the temporary stationing of Soviet troops on our territory. This can be likened to the acceptance of an illegal prison sentence for our country. We regard this as an attempt by a Great Eastern Power to reinstate Stalinism in the CSSR, as intervention in the internal affairs of our country, to which our State and Party leaders have offered no resistance. On the contrary, they have made repeated concessions, particularly under pressure exerted by discredited politicians of the pre-January type. . . . Our leaders are making one compromise after another. But every additional compromise weakens the trust the nation has in them. The "cabinet" policy-making which has been conducted in the past few weeks, resignations and removals from office of those whom we trust, like Kriegel, Sik, Ha'jek, Pavelm Palikán and Hejylar, and at the same time the continued presence of discredited politicians in top State and Party bodies are substantial concessions to those who are striving for the restoration of Stalinism. We regard declarations about the continuation of post–January reforms as empty phrases, because the post-January programme includes freedom of speech and freedom of association and assembly and cannot exist unless every citizen has the possibility of helping to shape his country's political system. . . . We are convinced that our Army is capable of protecting our Western frontiers and we demand that our Government and National Assembly inaugurate negotiations on the definitive withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. . . .

I cannot hazard a guess as to what steps the students will take next: that will depend on the developements in Czechoslovakia's unstable political situation; but I'm sure that whatever actions they take will be carefully considered and politically mature. At the beginning of this academic year a spokesman of the Philosophical Faculty warned the student body:

The activity of the students' organizations will be far more difficult than ever before: it will not be enough only to exert pressure on the State and Party organs of this country. We must bear in mind the existence of the leadership of another State that is more powerful than ours. We have a formally independent government, but not only are foreign troops stationed here, there are also other foreigners among us, there are the so-called commandants attached to the District Committees of the Communist Party, in contradiction to the Moscow protocol. Under these circumstances, our arguments, our wishes and protests, our whole logic have a very different weight. The people there seem to have quite a different

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brain structure from us. In everything we do we shall have to subordinate emotion to reason. Intellectual capacity is probably the one sphere in which the inhabitants of this country are superior to those who came here and to those who sent them. It would be a sad thing if university students were to stoop to reactions that are beneath their dignity.

This nation has once again been accused of heresy and a crusade has been launched against it in the name of the true faith. Perhaps the crusaders were momentarily deterred by the solidarity they encountered, but that unity can only be temporary; very soon it will begin to crack. Therefore, every force will be important which will have an effect not only on leading personalities but also on the public at large. . . .

The students are not isolated in their views. Besides young workers, they are supported as well by journalists and writers with whom they have been in close contact since last spring. The writers themselves in their declaration of October 31, 1968, addressed their leaders:

The nation will not cease to be grateful to the politicians who represented it in the August days and did everything possible to prevent bloodshed. But they must not forget the nation whose fantastic discipline and support created the conditions enabling them to negotiate at all. The nation has the right to demand that its politicians lead it forward, that in their efforts to lighten the present for themselves and the nation they should not lose the future. . . .

Therefore, we turn to the leaders of the country and the Party with an urgent appeal that they should again rely on national unity which despite calumnies, thanks to our traditions, personifies the most progressive ideas of modern humanity in the given Czechoslovak situation, for it is also a unity of convinced socialists. . . .

We turn to our leaders trusting that they will overcome fatigue, skepticism and anxiety, to which as human beings they are prone, that they will avert the isolation that threatens them, that they will derive strength from our unity and will not allow the year of great hopes to become a year of lasting shame. . . . We writers are resolved to do everything . . . for the further development of what we call socialism with a human face. We are not and never will be ready to admit to crimes we have not committed or to give thanks for help which is nothing but an injury. We are not and never will be willing to call a lie the truth and injustice necessity. Power can annihilate people but not their ideas. In this century alone we in Bohemia have witnessed three times the break up of a monolithic system so that truth might again ring out. . . .

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Censorship is imposed, travel restrictions tightened, one of the most outspoken political weeklys, *Politika,* is banned, people identified with the progressive post-January reforms are dismissed, Soviet troops are in the country. One could go on. But the unintimidated attitude of the Czech intelligentsia and particularly of the younger generation of students and workers gives them hope that this new attempt to destroy the freedom of a small nation will end as unsuccessfully as the preceding ones, that the youth of this country will one day have the chance to build upon the values created by their predecessors, to resolve the complexities of Czech politics, make full use of the nation's high level of culture and civilization, of its varied experience, and solve the so-called Czech question by the abolition of the system of universal manipulation. But it will take years.

In this post-January period the Czech people have contributed to the struggle for a humanist socialism, a socialism that will liberate man in every respect and create the possibility for the development of his full human potential. The world ought not to forget this, particularly those forces which call themselves Left Wing — for they should be concerned with the same aim — so that one of the August slogans may come true: "We have lost five brothers, but now the whole world is with us."

A. J.

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Another demonstration on Wenceslas Square. Note that the majority are young people. (Also offered to "Student".)

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TWO POEMS

By Frederick Seidel

THE SOUL MATE

Your eyes gazed
Sparkling and dark as hooves,
They had seen you through languor and error.
They were so still. They were a child.
They were wet like hours
And hours of cold rain.

Sixty-seven flesh inches
Utterly removed, of spirit
For the sake of nobody,
That one could love but not know—
Like death if you are God!
So close to me, my soul mate, like a projection.

I'd loved you gliding through St. Paul's sniffing
The torch of yellow flowers,
The torch had not lit the way.
Winter flowers, yourself a flame
In winter. In the cold
Like a moth in a flame.

I seemed to speak,
I seemed never to stop.
You tossed your head back and a cloud
Of hair from your eyes,
You listened with the beautiful
Waiting look of someone

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Waiting to be introduced,
Without wings but without weight, oh light!
As the fist which has learned how
Waving goodbye, opening and closing up to the air
To breathe. The child
Stares past his hand. The blank stares at the child.

Goodbye.

THE CURTAIN STIRS

Alive. Yes and awake. Flowers
Fall through his mind, in one slant, like snow.
The electric toothbrush flames in his hand.
Mozart sweetens the small room.

LSD tears he wept all night,
One hundred for a dead father.
LSD tears, they roll heavy
And burn like molten metal drops.

Now as the drug wears off he waits.
For a mother has remarried.
Oh the man swelled, supple bitch,
And smiled as if he might give birth.

Completely to be shut of both,
Purged pure and bare to all in one's fate
The drug makes possible at last
[*The curtain stirs*], out of the shell,

The old self, new and neat as a chick.
This dew, haze softness on waking has opened
His window on the street a crack.
Midnight tolls. The curtain stirs.

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Leo Bersani

THE JAMESIAN LIE

I

James's approach to his work in the Prefaces is especially congenial to a kind of criticism we have lately begun to value — and perhaps to overestimate. Van Wyck Brooks, with the purest intention to blame, wrote what might be recognized today as sophisticated praise when he spoke of the later James as "an impassioned geometer" and remarked that "what interested him was not the figures but their relations, the relations which alone make pawns significant." James's Prefaces often reach an anti-interpretative purity which makes some of our own austere defenses against interpretation seem almost embarrassingly rich with psychological meanings. They offer, with a kind of brazen unself-consciousness, an astonishingly artificial, even mechanical view of novelistic invention. It's not merely that James asserts the importance of technique in the Prefaces; more radically, he tends to discuss character and situation almost entirely as functions of technical ingenuities. The very elements in a Jamesian story which may strike us as requiring the most explanation are presented by James either as a *solution* to a problem of compositional harmony or else as the *donnée* about which it would be irrelevant to ask any questions at all.

James should constantly be referred to as a model of structuralist criticism. For the Prefaces are the best example I know of a criticism which consistently redirects our attention from the referential aspect of a work of art (its extensions into "reality") to its own structural coherence as the principal source of inspiration. Speaking of Maggie Verver in a preface which points to nothing more intriguing in *The Golden Bowl* than "the manner in which the whole thing remains subject to the register, ever so closely kept,

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of the consciousness of but two of the characters," James admires how the Princess both feels "everything she has to" in the story and acts as a lucid conductor of meaning, how she "duplicates, as it were, her value and becomes a compositional resource, and of the finest order, as well as a value intrinsic." We can go a step further and say that for James the two are really indistinguishable. As I will show later in more detail, *The Golden Bowl* dramatizes precisely the validity of "intrinsic" values literally coerced into being by an intense interest in "composition." James's characters enact the psychological adequacy of their creator's compositional motives.

What is most interesting about James's structurally functional view of character is that a certain devaluation of what we ordinarily think of as psychological interest is perfectly consistent with a realistic ambition redefined but never abandoned by James. It's as if he came to feel that a kind of autonomous geometric pattern, in which the parts appeal for their value to nothing but their contributive place in the essentially abstract pattern, *is* the artist's most successful representation of life. Thus he could perhaps even think, by the time of the Prefaces, that verisimilitude — a word he liked — has less to do with the probability of the events the novelist describes than with those processes, deeply characteristic of life, by which he creates sense and coherence from *any* event. The only faithful picture of life in art is not in the choice of a significant subject (James always argued against that pseudorealistic prejudice), but rather in the illustration of sense-, of design-making processes. James proves the novel's connection with life by deprecating its derivation from life; and it's when he is most abstractly articulating the growth of a structure that James is also most successfully defending the mimetic function of art (and of criticism). His deceptively banal position that only execution matters means most profoundly that verisimilitude, properly considered, is the grace and the truth of a formal unity.

But each artist's circle is drawn "by a geometry of his own," and the crucial question raised by James's work has to do with the relation between structuring processes and personality in art. The question is particularly relevant to James just because his interest in the compositional motive creates a striking superficiality of psychological motive. His fiction is notoriously dense in what I suppose

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we have to call psychological detail, but it is remarkably resistant to an interest in psychological depth. This is especially true of the later fiction. While it's obvious, for example, in *The Bostonians* that Olive's politics idealize her Lesbianism and that her Lesbianism energizes her politics, and while it's at least possible to detect "behind" Isabel Archer's unfocused appetite for experience a terror of sex made fairly explicit in her scenes with Caspar Goodwood, the grounds for what we might think of as "vertical" motive (plunging down "into" personality) eventually disappear from James's fiction. There is no reason to believe that any "obscure" motives enter into Vanderbank's refusal to marry Nanda Brookenham in *The Awkward Age*, or that an inability to be active with women in any way explains Stretcher's adventures in *The Ambassadors* or that Maggie and her father have an "unhealthy" attachment to each other in *The Golden Bowl*. It's not that such criticism is intrinsically cheap; no motive, after all, is vulgar when the work can be shown to provide interestingly enough for its discovery. But in James's late fiction the narrative surface is never richly menaced by meanings it can't wholly contain. Complexity consists not in mutually subversive motives but rather in the expanding surface itself which, when most successful, finds a place in its intricate design (the design, ideally, is also a moral hierarchy) for all the motives imaginable. We can easily be misled by the numerous passages where James's characters, burdened by their sense of the portentous, retreat into exclamation or expressive groans. What they renounce trying to express is generally not an intuition that would expose the ambiguity of all efforts to understand, but rather a richness of understanding which would expand the dialogue to monstrous proportions. This richness is in fact allowed to bloat the surrounding narrative in which an indirectly presented lucidity almost submerges the elliptical, "pictorially" provocative talk of James's characters.

Nothing could be further from Jamesian conversation than the classical *litote*. His characters' interjections and half-completed sentences are either a comment on analysis or an invitation to analysis, but their allusiveness suggests nothing of the verbal dead-end, that is, they don't refer us to a surplus of meaning which any formulation would be bound at least partially to betray. Classical language (the best modern example is Gide — who complained of finding

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"no mystery" in James, "no secrets" — in *L'Immoraliste* and *La Porte étroite*) is spare not simply as a technique of mystification, but rather because of a recognized incompatibility between expressive possibilities and the sources of behavior. An inadequate, hopelessly clear language thus *refers* to a psychology of obscure, inexpressible motive (distinct from the Jamesian "finely-mingled" motive). Whatever is said — in Gide, Constant or Mme. de LaFayette — can merely be designed to violate as gently as possible the necessarily unsaid, to "tremble" from the pressure of a psychology which mocks all intelligible distinctions and priorities of intention. Psychological density in French classicism and in certain Greek tragedies lurks behind a language both ominously allusive and defensively decorous. In James, on the other hand, density is what we move toward. With time we will have all there is to have, whereas, say, in Euripides and Racine both time and language, instead of creating motive, merely postpone the explosion of motive into act. And that explosion could have taken place before the illusory action ever began: the work of art is a delayed time bomb, and an exquisite language both entertains and excoriates our suspense.

The essential difference is of course in the imagined relation between meaning and expression. In both classicism and the kind of realism which James renounces, language is not strictly necessary to the subject of art. The self (in Racinian tragedy) and society (in realistic fiction) are either beyond or behind or prior to the work. And this fundamental premise can accommodate such superficially antagonistic manifestations as the art of the *litote,* the naturalist's exuberance at the prospect of making art a scientific copy of life, and the literature of suicidal silence as the ultimate deference to an ineffable or inexpressible "real." What James asks us to do in his later fiction is to detach the notions of reality and probability from all such external references — which is to say that he would encourage us to believe that our range of experience can be as great as our range of compositional resource. In short, compositional play need not be merely tangential to being; and, in the immense faith in time and language which this gamble implies, James works toward a richly superficial art in which hidden depths would never ironically undermine the life inspired by his own and his characters' "mere" ingenuities of design.

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For James himself this meant a certain indifference to the experience he brought to his work. Recognizing, in the preface to *Lady Barbarina,* the recurrence of the Europe-America theme in his fiction, he somewhat impatiently grants the inescapability of his history as well as its artistically neutral value:

> The great truth in the whole connexion, however, is, I think, that one never really chooses one's general range of vision — the experience from which ideas and themes and suggestions spring: this proves ever what it has *had* to be, this is one with the very turn one's life has taken; so that whatever it "gives," whatever it makes us feel and think of, we regard very much as imposed and inevitable. The subject thus pressed upon the artist is the necessity of his case and the fruit of his consciousness; which truth makes and has ever made of any quarrel with his subject, any stupid attempt to go behind *that,* the true stultification of criticism.

"To go behind" the determined range of vision is to make of art a tautological expression of personality. A certain kind of psychologically interpretative criticism is therefore stultifying because it aims at nothing less than the erasure of the work, its absorption and disappearance in its origins. If we find it logically necessary to fix such origins in order to articulate an implicit path of coherence, we should also recognize the incommensurability of the whole design to those meager points of departure. "The thing of profit is to *have* your experience — to recognize and understand it, and for this almost any will do; there being surely no absolute ideal about it beyond getting from it all it has to give." By moving from causes to composition rather than from composition back to causes, James insists on the fact that fictional invention is neither evasive nor tautological; instead, it *constitutes the self.*

By retracing the structural opportunities (for roundness, for antithesis, for producing illusions of mass without illusions of extent) which allowed each of his works to take shape, James provides the model for a critical complicity with the novelist's experiment. His technical interest in the expanding surface of each work illustrates his sympathy with the most profound intentions of his fiction. For the recurrent Jamesian subject is only superficially the international theme, or the confrontation of innocence and experience, or the conflict of acquisitive and self-renouncing impulses. His subject is

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freedom — but we must understand that word in the sense of inventions so coercive that they resist any attempt to enrich — or reduce — them with meaning. In his Prefaces James asserts that freedom much more confidently than in his fiction. His passionate geometry and his refusal "to go behind" constitute a triumph of composition over depth which is more often an aspiration than an achievement in his novels. The novels dramatize the difficulties of living by improvisation: the incompatibilities among different ways of composing life, the absence of determined values by which to discriminate morally among various compositions, the need to develop persuasive strategies capable of imposing personal ingenuities on the life of a community, and, finally, the nostalgia for an enslaving truth which would rescue us from the strenuous responsibilities of inventive freedom.

The novels are thus a complex critique of the approach to the novels proposed in the Prefaces. The purity of James's structuralist approach to his fiction depends on an indifference to some of the hesitations and conflicts which complicate his characters' efforts to see how living by compositional coherence alone can be made morally workable. The novels are a constantly dramatic struggle *toward* the security of the Prefaces. The latter therefore belong in the design of James's whole career, and it will not be violating the spirit of his own criticism to retrace the dramatic "germs" from which it grew. For the adequacy of structural or compositional motive, contrary to what is often argued today, is itself a *position* on human expression no less subject than other positions to historical or phenomenological analysis. Without, for example, reducing the Jamesian geometry to psychological pressures which could hardly accommodate the impressive structures of his fiction, we can nevertheless investigate the function of structure itself in a self-revolutionizing psychology. Hopefully, we will then be suggesting a way of covering James's fiction even more adequately, of placing the interest in composition within an often violent, occasionally lurid drama involving the mutation of lies into redemptive fictions.

II

"I see. I see." Apparently nothing is more stimulating, more exhilarating for James's characters than that act of recognition which

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they constantly and somewhat breathlessly confirm. But seeing can be dangerous as well as thrilling. James's fiction is full of visual shocks which constitute crucial turning points for his heroes and heroines. Isabel's "sense of accident" dies on the day she enters her drawing room and, in "a sudden flicker of light," sees her husband and Madame Merle in an attitude of "familiar silence"; the way they have of being together in private strikes her as "something detected." "Their relative positions" (Osmond seated, Madame Merle standing), "their absorbed mutual gaze" give Isabel her first glimpse into their intimacy. Hyacinth Robinson finds something "inexpressibly representative" — of the degree of Paul Muniment's intimacy with the Princess Casamassima and of the change in Hyacinth's own relation with her — in his vision, through the fog, of his two friends getting out of a cab, talking on the Princess's doorstep, and then reentering her house. In "a wave of anxiety" during which Hyacinth "felt his heart beat insanely, ignobly," he has "a very exact revelation of the state of feeling of those who love in the rage of jealousy." And in *The Ambassadors*, Strether's recognition of Chad and Mme. de Vionnet in their boat, and their recognition of him, make for "a sharp, fantastic crisis that had popped up as if in a dream" and which has only to last for a few seconds to make Strether feel it "as quite *horrible*." Finally, "lighting up the front of the great black house with an expression that quite broke the monotony, that might almost have shocked the decency, of Portland Place," Charlotte and Amerigo offer their splendid and intimately conjoined presence to Maggie who, seeing them on the balcony from the street below, thinks again "of how the pair would be at work," of how securely and masterfully they have organized their betrayal.

Each of these scenes is interpreted as a betrayal, and the betrayal takes the form of an intimacy which excludes the seer. The violent, traumatic nature of these sights is not always immediately explicit (the language in the scene from *The Portrait of a Lady,* for example, is comparatively mild), but they haunt the consciousness of the Jamesian hero as images of a hidden and threatening truth from which, for what usually turn out to be sinister reasons, he has been excluded. James of course uses such scenes as an economical way of moving his heroes from one stage of awareness to another: a process of awareness is compressed into an instant of packed vision.

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But it would be foolish to pretend we can avoid "going behind" James's interest in these pictures. His preference for *this* technique of compositional compression makes us feel, inevitably, that composition profits here from some obsessive memory, a memory of glimpsed intimacy interpreted as both violent and treacherous. And it's perhaps an inability — or, for reasons we can naturally never know, an unwillingness — to recuperate from the impact of that vision which explains the exasperating avoidance of fact and direct statement in the late fiction. A dismissal of fact, as we shall see, can be liberating; but there is also a kind of playing with it in its absence which allows James's characters both to keep fact out of sight and yet to be constantly teased by it. James increases the power of traumatic scenes — or, more generally, of "truth" — by the fluttering verbal evasiveness which surrounds them. The absorption of his characters in the margins or the implications of facts makes the unmentioned facts all the more ominous. And perhaps nowhere is the violence of fact so complete as when the curiosity or terror of it precludes its actual appearance — as if the brutal nature of certain situations could best be shown by their blinding effect on the persons most determined, afraid and finally unable to see.

But if seeing can spell catastrophe for James's characters, it also satisfies a frequently cruel curiosity. The two sides of the visual coin may be distributed in different characters, but the intensity of suffering and the intensity of pleasure in the single act of seeing suggest a dialectical unity in the act beyond its division into various personae. Observation, Mitchy remarks to Mr. Longdon in *The Awkward Age,* is the "most exquisite form" of "pursuit," and the cruelty of Dr. Sloper in *Washington Square* consists exactly in his curiosity about how far Catherine will go with Morris Townsend, in the entertainment he finds in spying on her character. Even Ralph Touchett, James curiously remarks, has "an almost savage desire" to make Isabel complain about Osmond so that he may directly see her suffering. A "psycho-critical" case, admittedly neglectful of qualifying contexts, could, I think, be made for a skeletal psychology of vision in James's work. There is a tortured identity and contrast between masochistic and sadistic "moments" in the act of seeing, between seeing as punishment submitted to and seeing as punishment inflicted. And at some point in its telling of a fantasy story *not* told by

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James, such an approach might suggest the willfulness of the ostensibly imposed visual shock. The advantages of suffering betrayal (or of inviting it) perhaps lie in the peculiar sort of intimate detachment which betrayal creates. It gives the right to accuse which we can use to break a relation while secretly continuing it. Thus, on the one hand, a kind of general snooping may constitute a desperate claim for independence, a means of breaking away from figures who threaten to engulf the self. But at the same time the evidence of betrayal assures the durability of superficially broken bonds within the protective and ambiguous terms of resentment — or forgiveness. In such a scheme, *The Golden Bowl* would represent this harmony between betrayal and the security of unbroken attachments: the intimacy between Charlotte and Amerigo is the beneficent treason which transforms the intimacy between Maggie and Amerigo from an illusion into a reality.

But let's reverse the interpretative direction, proceeding from this point of departure to more of the novelistic surface which I have been ignoring in my conjecture about psychological depths. In James's fiction the connection between vision and betrayal is less interesting as something to be explained than as a novelistic provocation. I call it a point of departure (one could undoubtedly choose others) not because it's where he begins chronologically, but because, throughout James's career, it frequently recurs as that stroke in the design from which it's both most difficult and most imperative to "depart." Psychological explanations alone account poorly for the departure since they excavate the reasons for taking pleasure in the point of supposed origin. They tend, in other words, to denounce the psychological obscurantism of the text instead of repeating its psychological initiative. The availability of such criticism as a weapon against literature is made painfully clear by Maxwell Geismar's use of the obvious voyeurism in James to clinch his vindictive assault against *Henry James and the Jacobites*. But the novelist, closer in this respect to the psychoanalyst than to the psychoanalytically-minded literary critic, exploits the frustrations of a recurrent pattern in order to compel his imagination to invent *other* pleasures. Thus we shall see James's characters exploiting — often unsuccessfully — the possibilities of what might be called a luminous blindness.

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The basis for escape from the cruel shock of vision is radical casting of doubt on the objects of vision. And the question of what there *is* to see naturally generalizes itself into a skeptical view of truth. The truth-seekers in James are usually the betrayed Americans, but they are betrayed less because they are Americans than because they believe in the truth. James's criticism of this belief is of course hesitant; and the texture of his dialogues profits from his inability to shake off easily his own intellectual and moral commitment to truth. We see that commitment in the difficulty he has dissociating artfulness from evil. Expression itself in James often seems to be intrinsically suspect and, most melodramatically, it's equivalent to hypocrisy and betrayal. Throughout James's career (notable examples are *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Wings of the Dove*), we find an almost necessary deduction of dishonesty from the art of appearances. The problem, we might say, is to find an alternative to Isabel Archer different from Madame Merle. Or, to put it another way, James has to recuperate Madame Merle morally by incorporating her into Isabel — that is, by creating a character whose intentions coincide exactly with his or her fictions.

The success of this project, which seems to me fundamental in James, involves taking enormous risks with the definitiveness of novelistic plot and character. In the middle ground between victimization by fact and the triumph of fiction, there is only suspense. Being and acting are delayed and suspended as either unspecified possibility or uncontrolled conjecture. Eugenia in *The Europeans* lives the novelistically dangerous life of a character whose reality depends on the willingness of other characters to expand their own natures by inventing one for her. Of Eugenia James writes: "There were several ways of understanding her: there was what she said, and there was what she meant, and there was something between the two, that was neither." The essentially narrow honesty of Robert Acton — which, James suggests, would impress us like carrying an agreeably perfumed but occasionally inconvenient bunch of flowers — finally settles for the vulgar view that Eugenia "is a woman who will lie"; the other view would be that she is a woman incessantly open to interpretation. Eugenia's "dishonesty," as Richard Poirier has indicated in *The Comic Sense of Henry James,* is the margin she leaves for her own and for other people's absorbing possibilities.

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If she lied she would say the opposite of what she means, but "between" her words and her meanings lies the *prospect* that the beneficently strenuous conjectures of another mind may offer some views of her meanings rich enough to make a relation seem appealing. With Eugenia James dramatizes the possibility of an intentionality unsupported by motive, that is, of a self so responsive and so indefinite that it is created entirely (but never limited) by the responses to its performances.

There is nothing "profound" about Eugenia, which perhaps explains the discomfort James clearly feels with her. The idea of her fibbing hides her psychological originality (her emptiness) in the unflattering but novelistically safer image of a character bent on deception. She exchanges, as it were, the moral benefit of not lying for the ontological benefit of having a character. James hesitates to deprive her entirely of the definiteness which a specific motive gives her; and his moral opinion of Eugenia reflects the uncertainty of his creative conception. As Poirier also says in the best discussion we have of the early novels, it's Felix who most conveniently distracts James from his unsettled opinions with regard to Eugenia. Easy, charming, open and honest, Felix provides a more conventional image of civilized urbanity which saves James the trouble of deciding just how far he will go in proposing a civilized artfulness both indifferent and superior to the Wentworths' moral sincerities. James thus manages to evade making Eugenia's dishonesty either completely irrelevant or completely sinister.

Eugenia is nonetheless central in the imaginative progression I'm speaking of. She suggests the possibility of identifying character with the appreciation of character, the possibility, ultimately, of both limiting and infinitely expanding reality by defining it only *as* (and not merely through) an interested version of it. James moves slowly and hesitantly toward an epistemological position implicit in his defense of the center-of-consciousness method in the preface to *The Princess Casamassima*: "What a man thinks and what he feels," James writes, "are the history and the character of what he does . . . ," by which James really dismisses the independent importance, and perhaps even the existence, of what he does: "I then see their 'doing,' that of the persons just mentioned, as, immensely, their feeling, their feeling as their doing. . . ." What we know we

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know through appreciation and not perception; knowledge is a kind of seeing which can dispense with the objects of vision. Thus the possible shock of seeing disappears when, having emphasized the obvious fact that to see creates a relation between the seer and the thing seen, James identifies the latter with the *activity* of the former and implicitly challenges us to locate the exact point at which appreciation or conjecture violates the truth. The problematical quality of the correspondence between our mental possessions of reality and reality itself makes the obsession with reality an unnecessary restriction of freedom. There is no truth to tell, only, as James writes in the preface to *What Masie Knew,* "truth diffused, distributed and, as it were, atmospheric." The reality of a thing depends on the quality of the treatment it gets — a position we find acceptable enough when James uses it to defend the novelist's right to choose his subject, but which we tend to balk at when it is followed through with the rigorously explicit consistency of James's later fiction.

III

We are perhaps right to feel uneasy. For one thing, the view I have just outlined has important consequences for the social attitudes dramatized in *The Bostonians*, *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Tragic Muse*. James treats the energetic projects of revolutionaries and social reformers with the distrust he reserves for all forms of direct pursuit. And in a way parallel to his redefinition of "doing" as "feeling" in personal relationships, he deflects the perception of historical fact to the artistic, politically passive appreciation of history. But the invalidation of political activism implied by the Jamesian epistemology is perhaps *our* loss; for James himself the dangers seem to have been of another order. We see them most clearly in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Awkward Age*. The former can certainly be read as James's least "psychological" story. It *is,* I think, a study in pathology, but the sickness depicted is one of pure consciousness, of a lucidity intense enough to create life from a violation of life's probabilities. This "excursion into chaos," as James calls *The Turn of the Screw* in his preface, is at the same time the novelist's experiment with the fairy tale, the governess's

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adventure and the reader's confrontation with a story in which the very question of what is "true" is made irrelevant by the *consequences* of an agitated imagination. The questions of the ghosts' reality and of the governess's repressions are unanswerable simply because *The Turn of the Screw* raises no questions at all. Rather, it illustrates the power of questions (those which the governess asks Mrs. Grose and the children) to produce events by the very intensity and consistency with which they are asked. The governess is the Jamesian character idealized to the point of parable, that is, to the point where the essentially conventional distinction between character and author disappears and the character, released from the obligation of having to operate within a clearly and distinctly given world of fictional events, assumes the function of novelizing. The governess is in pursuit, but she is, quite literally, in pursuit of the story itself. There is nothing to know about in *The Turn of the Screw,* there are only conjectures to be imposed, conjectures which the governess makes catastrophically credible. We have no analysis of her psychology; we never "go behind" the children's behavior; no one authenticates the ghosts' appearance for us. We simply see — and this is the purity and the power of the story — a conviction about the ghosts strong enough to destroy the children. And, anecdotically, this ghost story is a perfect representation of novelistic power as effective in life as it can be in art; the spookiness of *The Turn of the Screw* is the spookiness of consciousness *persuading* tragedy to be born from its own insubstantial but nonetheless contagious fantasies.

The governess creates at Bly a tightly knit drama in which each of her moves contributes to the realization of her fears. Her imagination builds a structure of inexorable events perhaps more frightening than the "chaos" we imagine when the mind is no longer constrained by a secure perception of truth. Composition, as James demonstrates in *The Turn of the Screw,* isn't threatened when the mind is liberated from the superstition of truth (or the conventions of realistic fiction); but composition by itself is morally neutral. The ethic of fiction is thus menaced by this unqualified commitment to fictions. A world without truth accommodates anguish and cruelty just as easily as a world in which truth provides a basis for hypocrisy and betrayal. The most difficult Jamesian enterprise

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will be the search for the morality of a strictly structural coherence. Is composition, in short, amenable to moral discriminations?

The Awkward Age makes an even stronger case against the liberated imagination than does *The Turn of the Screw*. The latter gives us the melodrama of consciousness, and while it has been received as a model of mystification, both its simplicity and its originality are apparent, I think, once we stop assuming that such a story has to have a hidden subject, that there must be either real ghosts or real neuroses. *The Awkward Age* is a much more difficult work; in it the critique of appreciation and conjecture is made not through a sensational image of their power to destroy, but rather through the subtle display of a corrupting fineness of appreciation. *The Awkward Age* is about the naturally promiscuous nature of talk, about a taste for talk so cultivated and yet so uncontrolled that the passion for conversation has affected the capacity for passion. It's as if the interest of Mrs. Brook and her friends in intelligent chatter had revealed the impersonal nature of what makes talk *purely interesting*. Conversational discriminations are self-promoting, and, in its most refined and satisfyingly designed state, language entertains personality out of existence and, as it were, continues to chatter on its own steam. Nanda is the moving victim of that extremity in *The Awkward Age,* and Vanderbank provides a troubling image of a man nostalgic for distinctions more personal than verbal, but no longer able to find in himself a personal pressure which would limit and humanize his intelligence. He is nonexpressive, extraordinarily civilized, and spiritually dead. He is in fact nothing but talk; but the subject of *The Awkward Age* is talk, and the novel's perfection consists in precisely that scenic form which may at first strike us as so artificial. Or rather, its very artificiality is the novel's point. James has given us what he calls in the preface "really constructive dialogue, dialogue organic and dramatic, speaking for itself, representing and embodying substance and form." The world of *The Awkward Age* is one in which only artful dialogue exists; and its profound subject is the superficially non-Jamesian theme of a civilization destroyed by its superior entertainments, that is, by what might almost be taken for its art.

The Turn of the Screw and *The Awkward Age* dramatize the dangers to civilized life in fictions released from a shared if conven-

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tional belief about the nature of reality. To believe that certain things (like time and death) are absolutely resistant to the persuasive powers of fiction naturally provides a basis on which to make a moral hierarchy of fictions: we can at least begin to "place" them ethically by referring to those aspects of life which no fiction can violate. I think that James did go so far as to conceive even of time and death as merely our most privileged fictions (think, in addition to *The Turn of the Screw*, of *The Great Good Place*, *The Sense of the Past* and the essay "Is There a Life After Death?"); but a view of life as wholly obedient to a willed consciousness of life could hardly make for untroubled optimism. It's frivolous to see in James only a limitless faith in the civilizing powers of intelligence, or to think of his trust in consciousness as a naïvely hopeful dream of escape from the constraints of experience. Society and personality are more likely to be *victimized* by the autonomy of an intelligence responsive only to its own discriminatory logic. Perhaps the ultimate difficulty in contemporary searches for a theory of fiction is not in the prospect of our having to postulate a mind unstructured by reality. Consciousness and language appear, after all, to be structured "before" being enacted as particular experience. But how can we reconcile the compositional appeal of the mind's fictions (and by "fiction" in this most general sense I of course mean any pictorial or verbal syntax in consciousness) with both the appealing variety of particular experiences and the need to make *moral* discriminations not necessarily deducible from logical structures? How, in short, can life be saved from the fictions which make life for us?

Only *The Golden Bowl* indicates at least the possibility of a satisfactory answer to that question. It's a work immensely different from *The Ambassadors* and *The Wings of the Dove,* although the questions which it succeeds in making irrelevant give it a thematic continuity with the two earlier novels. Now the realism of all three works is the necessary condition for the triumph of fiction over truth. Fictions in *The Awkward Age* and *The Sacred Fount* don't triumph; they merely proliferate. But now James makes an ultimately illusory but crucial regression to a novelistic mode he had almost abandoned. The plots of *The Ambassadors, The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* are neither shadowy nor improbable; they are simply inferior, corny plots compared with those of

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other realistic novelists intent, unlike James, on imposing plots as definitive versions of reality. But "what happens" in the Jamesian novel is nonetheless appropriately used to reinstate a necessary resistance of "reality" to pure consciousness, or, more exactly, of novelistic fact to the theoretically limitless capacity of the imagination to expand. The uninteresting situations of the later fiction create relations for consciousness which limit its play and make its achievements socially and morally workable. Milly Theale, we might say, has to die from her creator's poverty-stricken sense of reality in order to convince us that reality is both catastrophic and unimportant.

But James seems still tempted to minimize the importance of the resistances, although now in ways more complex than in the ways just prior to the "major phase." *The Wings of the Dove*, for example, might lead us to believe that fictions can have the kind of power James wants them to have only when the world is reduced to a single, depersonalized consciousness. There is a merging of narrative perspectives in the novel which gives some point to Quentin Anderson's approach to James's work as moral allegory, although the specific references (derived from the Swedenborgian system of James's father) which Anderson brings to the novels generally make them unrecognizable. On the one hand, we have in *The Wings of the Dove* a social drama involving distinctly different individuals. But their distinctness is threatened by the resemblances among the various narrative blocks: all the principal centers — first Kate, then Milly and finally Densher — seem to be reenacting the moral choice of the mind from whose point of view the story is really being enacted. It's as if we had three images of the self confronted with the alternatives of the world of the lioness and the world of the dove. And when Kate has chosen the former and Milly the latter, they allegorically become their choice for the final and most crucial spiritual performance, which is of course Densher's.

How do we recognize this mutation of personality into allegorical function? First of all, the records of consciousness hover between what seem to be the characters' actual thoughts and the narrator's sensitivity to the compositional appeal of (his or their?) mental sequences. James's habit of giving us the consequences and the implications of a thought or a fact before giving us the thought

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or the fact itself shifts the organizing principle of the text from the temporal logic of a character engaged in the story's movement to the spatial perspective of a narrator who ignores his character's time for the sake of his own designs. And the design has inspirations of its own: we see it spilling over the character's consciousness in all those passages where the narrator tells us what his center "might have thought." Most important, the potential thought has as great a propelling force as the actual thought. In fact, the distinction between the potential and the actual is superficial, and the narrative hunger for meanings in *The Wings of the Dove* produces plot; speculation is not simply about events but also promotes them.

This displacement of the drama from the characters' lives to the narrator's mind has its most serious consequence in Densher's relation to Milly and in James's attitude toward that relation. The sophistry in which Densher must indulge so strenuously in order to justify his continuing to deceive Milly could strike us as exemplary proof of the Jamesian moral sense gone awry. James, whose center-of-consciousness method leaves an ample margin for ironic comment, is strikingly tolerant of Densher's self-righteous conclusion that he's behaving decently toward Milly simply by remaining perfectly still and refusing to lie with his lips (a strategy which serves Kate's plans beautifully). But, more interestingly, the tortuous moral arguments by which Densher tries to justify his failure to act dramatize an awkward transition from a novel of social relationships to an allegory of spiritual appreciations. The importance of Milly as a possibility *internal* to Densher makes James underplay the murderous implications of his hero's treatment of her as a distinct human being. And this community of consciousness is not, as Anderson argues, due to James's use of emblems "rigidly determined" by an allegorical intention merely "expressed in, but not created by language"; allegory is what happens dramatically in *The Wings of the Dove*. Densher's flabby reasoning allows him to move from one spiritual allegiance to another without ever disturbing the perfect stillness of his being. Indeed, the very sequence of events in the novel, especially in the last books, seems to be determined by the development of Densher's surrender to the dovelike in human nature. Everyone "lets him off": Lord Mark by delivering the fatal blow to Milly, Sir Luke (who understands that Densher "had meant

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awfully well"), Milly and James himself. As a result, Milly's success in redeeming Densher is partly undermined by something unconvincing in his betrayal of her. It's as if Densher's prolonged deception of Milly were nothing more than the time-filling pretext which allows his appreciation of her to mature. We are to believe that the deception kills her, but her death seems hardly to matter when she has been treated for so long merely as an appeal of consciousness.

The record of Densher's anguished shift of allegiance from Kate to Milly is one of the most moving sections in all James's writing, but we are partly moved, I think, by the creative dilemma of the center behind the center. Having made such a powerful representation of conflict in life, the Jamesian narrator underplays the tragic outcome of the conflict by inviting us to consider it not as a consequence of cruelty but rather as the ultimate novelistic convenience which rids us of Milly as a character and transforms the greedy pursuit of her fortune into the voracious appreciation of her spirit. But she has really disappeared before she dies, disappeared, that is, into the Palazzo Leporelli of Densher's spirit, which in turn has been merged into a perspective from which the move from Lancaster Gate to the Palazzo Leporelli involves nothing more than a private change of spiritual climate. Densher's paroxysm of moral scruples therefore affects us as the creative strategy meant to veil the fact that we are no longer in the kind of novelistic world where such scruples would be relevant. In this novel in which social truth is essentially social brutality, James allows Densher, finally, to die to the world as completely as Milly has died. The image of Densher alone in his rooms with his conjectures of the "turn" Milly might have given to the letter he has given to Kate without reading is perhaps James's most powerful image of consciousness, once again, triumphantly and eerily self-sufficient.

Consciousness in James can use its fictions to overcome resistances and actually change relations in life only when it acts on a crucial distinction between criticism and art. It could be said that criticism implies a certain suspicion of art; it watches that performance of life which is art and attacks its finality and its peculiarity by absorbing it into an interpretation. And interpretation is intrinsically generalizing and depersonalizing; art as it exists *in* criticism, as Santayana suggested, "belongs" to the community rather than to the

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individual — it has gained in significance and lost in particularity. Ideally, criticism is an exercise with no subject behind it; its extreme logic is to be a kind of laborious babble, an organized form of play in which the critic renounces more personal performances in order to recapitaluate the activity of a mind he must finally recognize as inaccessible. The nature of criticism is to be between personalities, and in that unidentifiable "position" it discovers the somewhat sickening richness of disinterested conjecture. The current fashion, especially in France, to speak of such things as a "silence" as the origin of literature, or the incessant murmur of an impersonal language, is accompanied, significantly, by an unprecedented prominence of critical writing and an equally unprecedented aspiration in literature itself toward the suicidal inclusion of its own criticism, toward the replacement of a personal voice by a voice which seeks to compose conjectures about what it *might* express. The menace of criticism, in short, proceeds from its very freedom of appreciation. If, on the one hand, it liberalizes art by "respeaking" it in a less insistent, more abstract language, it also proposes a passionless indulgence in the possibilities of design. Art is final and without significance; criticism is tentative and, within the limits of coherence, an inexhaustible inventor of meanings.

We can now see the deceptive psychological reticence of James's Prefaces in a new light. They are pure criticism in what they avoid precisely those aspects of James's fiction which would limit and constrain their own responsiveness to the appeals of composition. And their reticence about meaning is deceptive in the sense that by insisting almost exclusively on structural ingenuities, they propose the further (unexploited) ingenuity of a criticism in which the psychology of the work itself could be inferred from the structures of the criticism. James's Prefaces are a résumé of the history of criticism's inevitable violations of art; they celebrate the privilege, which criticism appears to enjoy less polemically and less anxiously than art, of an expression not expressive of a self. But in his novels James tests the viability of this critical freedom for the representation of life in art. And in *The Turn of the Screw* he gives us the nightmare of criticism; in *The Awkward Age,* a society appreciating itself, we might say, out of its capacity to subordinate smart talk to personal feeling; and in *The Wings of the Dove,* a drama of blurred identi-

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ties in which the real hero is a narrator-center responsible to other people only in his appreciations. The community of consciousness achieved in *The Wings of the Dove* is an impressive warning of the very dangers to community in the critically-minded Densher's "reading" of the "text" of Milly. He literally makes her his own, destroying the real peculiarity of her presence which we feel early in the work. Densher illustrates how a language of appreciation runs the risk of generalizing the particular too successfully, thus eliminating the unassimilable differences among individuals without which community extends no further than the reaches of one man's ingenuities.

IV

Appreciation and intelligence in themselves give us illusory victories over the restraints imposed on freedom by personal needs and social antagonisms. In his later fiction James finally submits criticism to a critique provided by what might be called the superior finality of art. *The Golden Bowl* affirms the triumph of fictional composition over a powerfully resistant reality, but Maggie Verver's fictions have the irresistibly coercive strength of an art which uncompromisingly rejects any attempt to tamper with its forms. She lacks that vulnerability to appreciation which makes Mme. de Vionnet extraordinarily but somehow imperfectly artful. By subjecting his most artful characters to either the greater moral sensitivity or the greater conjectural talents of a critical center of consciousness, James has generally made us view images of his own novelistic activity with some suspicion. (Mme. de Vionnet is finally willing to believe, with Strether, that her magnificent forms *are* deceptions; she would have liked to "be" as sublime as he has imagined her to be.) But in *The Golden Bowl* we see the action of art from the point of view of the artist; James shifts from dramatizing a critical appreciation of art to representing directly an artistic manipulation of life's materials. And the deceptions which throughout James's fiction have allowed him to consider the idea of discrediting art are now offered as art's *moral* justification. Maggie is a fusion of Isabel Archer and of Madame Merle, an extraordinary fusion in which idealism is confirmed by a willingness to lie which makes Madame Merle's duplicity seem tamely scrupulous. In *The Golden Bowl*

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James proposes a kind of sincerity absolutely divorced from truth; the fictions which Maggie rather ruthlessly imposes on everyone else in the novel leave no room for truth — they create reality instead of hiding it. She brings Eugenia of *The Europeans* to the fruition of a definite and major lie; but the lie itself leaves an even greater margin for other people's freedom than Eugenia's elaborately evasive manners. At the same time Maggie's own freedom to compose reality, unlike the governess's freedom in *The Turn of the Screw,* is disciplined by what she suffers as a result of her early efforts at composition. Reality in *The Golden Bowl* consists in the novelistic arrangements of the first half; the second half gives us the correction, the unashamed, radical revision which Maggie then makes of her own work and which James, speaking in the preface to *The Golden Bowl* of his own revisions for the New York edition of his novels, defines and defends as "re-perusal, registered," as "the particular vision of the matter itself that experience had at last made the only possible one."

We couldn't hope for a more exact summation of *The Golden Bowl.* In it human relations are seen entirely in terms of their compositional appeal. The only drama in the novel is the conflict between Amerigo's and Charlotte's defective reading of the Ververs' composition in the first half, and Maggie's successful resistance to their interpretation in the second half. As James says of himself in the preface, Maggie doesn't consider for a moment the possibility of "re-writing"; she simply "registers" the "re-perusal" of her work made imperative by the adultery which has, with some appearance of coherent appreciation, been inferred from her work. We accept the prestigious morality of Maggie's insisting on "not, by a hair's breath, deflecting into the truth" because the only status given to the truth she denies is that of a compositional invitation which she has merely to withdraw. It's not that the facts which Maggie defeats are obscure; indeed, Maggie's success — and the success of *The Golden Bowl* — depends on a complete lack of ambiguity about how the Ververs' ingenious arrangements for keeping everyone happy have been exploited by Charlotte and the Prince. We know what's going on, which is not the case in *The Turn of the Screw,* where the only clear events are those willed or at least imagined by the governess; furthermore, there is no convenient death, as in *The*

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Wings of the Dove, to dissipate antagonisms in an allegory of posthumous reconciliations. Betrayal does take place in *The Golden Bowl,* and it causes great suffering. But what James suggests is that this reality — so ominously final elsewhere in his work — is not a fact prior to artfulness but, like all human activities, is rather a possible development of some artful design and can be replaced by other possible developments. This is the profound justification of James's refusal "to go behind": because experience is never without design, it's impossible to locate an original design, that is, an absolute fact or motive which could not itself be recomposed, whose nature would not be changed by changes in its relations.

In a sense, it's irrelevant in *The Golden Bowl* that Amerigo and Charlotte were in love before the story began. Their past is a weak concession on James's part to an order of psychological probability which the novel in fact dismisses; what's important is that they make love as a result of the arrangements contrived during the time of the novel itself. It's as if the geometry of human relations *implied* what we call human feelings into existence. The feelings are real enough, but they are, so to speak, the elaborations of surfaces — they have no depth. Conflict in James means the conflicting implications of designs; to revise life may be agonizing, but revision can remain strictly superficial. And what we may find lacking in James is the reconciliation of this compositional view of experience with a sense of depth — a reconciliation attempted by Proust, who manages to account for the unconscious not as a formless source of designs but as a kind of persistent compositional "theme" recognizable in all our compositional variations. It's therefore more difficult for James to imagine how some relations can be more difficult to avoid than others. On the one hand, he can, as we have seen, imagine the freedom of consciousness as unlimited. On the other hand, when he imagines resistances to the free imagination, the resistances either take on the prestige of an implacable reality which destroys his characters' taste for life (as with Isabel and, I think, Strether) or they are overcome (as in *The Golden Bowl*) by strategies which depend on certain religious assumptions for their power.

There *is* a religion of art, overworked as the expression may be, and *The Golden Bowl* defines it very precisely: it assumes that the observation of forms is sufficient to produce a conversion of being.

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Now nothing in the novel condemns Adam Verver morally for thinking of Charlotte and the Prince as fine pieces for his collection. Indeed, that deceptively crude attitude toward them is perfectly consistent with the view of human relations I have just discussed: the most profound emotional commitments are a way of responding to the alluring possibilities of entertainingly intricate designs. But this compositional ethic is threatened by competing views of how the different pieces of the collection should be "placed." And in this human museum, where *all* the characters are in fact in the collection, the relation of the collectors (Mr. Verver and, more profoundly, Maggie) to their pieces has to be strained to the point of duplicating the relation of the artist to his work. It's up to Maggie to keep the pieces at the right distances from one another, and her activity resembles the novelist's resistance, which James speaks of in the Prefaces, to the tendency of his material to get out of hand and defeat his structural intentions. The material, as it were, begins to collaborate too intimately in the design; it menaces the work by being too appreciative of the work's possibilities. It's as if the critic, in the most creative sense, were lurking within the work itself; indeed, his presence is figured in *The Golden Bowl* by Charlotte and the Prince, and by Fanny Assingham. The extraordinary section at the end of the first part in which Fanny figures out what will happen in the second part is a kind of critique *in medias res* in which the dependence of novelistic plot on critical speculation is introduced as a literal possibility within the novel itself. Fanny is James's clearest image of an interpretative promiscuity at work in art itself long before the critics submit art to *their* interpretations. Because the second half of the novel seems almost forced into being by the logic of her appreciations, Fanny appears to suggest a legitimate subordination of art to criticism. By letting us see how his intelligent *ficelle* pulls the strings of his own imagination, James would almost appear to be suggesting that interpretation creates the reality of art, that a critic's hypotheses are responsible to nothing more than their own developmental logic.

But Maggie prevents this possibility by her happily narrow insistences, by the self-sacrificial cruelty which makes her both the artist and the savior of *The Golden Bowl*. Fanny, like the adulterous lovers, has to be checked. She is willing to see everything (she

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even imagines an entirely different novel, one in which she would have been in love with the Prince herself) and just as willing to take nothing seriously (if she breaks the bowl, adultery ceases to exist, as if Charlotte and the Prince existed only in Fanny's mind). Maggie's speculative entertainments, on the other hand, have a very different kind of insignificance. The major difference between *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl* is that plot is *not* resolved by appreciative speculation in *The Golden Bowl.* Maggie is constantly imagining what people might have said or thought, but, interestingly enough, these conjectures are generally set apart from the "real" text in quotation marks, like a warning to the text not to let itself be seduced by its own suggestiveness. Maggie's speculations really produce nothing; they are simply a way of filling time while she, as we shall see in a moment, is standing outside of time. She does absolutely nothing but wait for the single fiction she promotes — that of her own and her father's happy marriages — to stifle every other way of living the story. Her art includes discriminations but it doesn't depend on them; indeed, it seems to depend on her stubbornly presenting again and again her original design. The novel — both in its events and in the style which relates them — is constantly entertaining implications and deductions (often within an extravagant metaphorical logic), but Milly's purpose checks James's apparent complicity with the body of his work. Intelligence fills *The Golden Bowl,* but its moral value is made extremely ambiguous by the fact that Charlotte and the Prince deduce their love affair from an ingenious but authentically intelligent view of their situation. Maggie, so to speak, pays no attention to their "argument"; she receives it without accepting it. Instead of entering into a critical relationship with their logically defensible understanding of what she has intended, she defeats that understanding with the interrogative stillness of a finished work of art.

Maggie lies, and waits to see what time will do. She dramatizes more convincingly than any other character in literature the concrete meaning of our clichés about great art as "eternal." The so-called eternity of art has nothing to do with its universality; it refers to the historical persistence of objects about which nothing final can ever be said, around which conjectures multiply, compete and usually disappear. And perhaps the only way we know that

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there *are* objects in art is because they are always pointed at by the very interpretations which obscure them. Something nevertheless does of course happen to the work of art in time, whether it be the time of the artist's creation, or of his revisions or of the revisions of criticism. The very strength of the design depends on a certain loss or erosion of some of its values; in his Prefaces James movingly evokes those sacrifices of profit which Laurence Holland, in *The Expense of Vision,* has brilliantly shown to be part of the enacted drama of James's fiction. The lost profit in *The Golden Bowl* on which the triumph of the original design depends is the relation between Maggie and her father. The Ververs' departure for America is the consequence of that critical lucidity which, during the time of this composition, has discovered the contradictions and the dangers of a too ambitious design.

But the profit gained from this loss testifies to a power in the design greater than any weakness. The coerced freedom which Maggie gives to Amerigo, analogous to the freedom which art offers to criticism, consecrates a marriage in which there is finally nothing to say or to know. Her patience requires that his appreciation of her mature to the point where his interest in interpretation will have died. The adulterous lovers' ingenious use of Maggie as a "compositional resource" yields to the pressure of the decorous fiction that she *is* a wife, that is, a "value intrinsic." That surrender of interest in the name of a more complete surrender is of course the love for which Maggie tells Fanny Assingham that she can bear anything. And when Maggie's forms have survived every possible interpretation of them, Amerigo intimately identifies himself with her self-confident art, thus ending her performance by his unqualified participation in it.

The Prince's conversion, like Densher's, depends on his recognition of a sacrifice so lovingly and so tyrannically devoid of specific claims that in order to accept it he must imitate it. By appearing to ask for absolutely nothing in return for their stupendous gifts, Milly and Maggie make partial reimbursements impossible. As the Prince guesses even before his marriage, he will have to pay for Maggie's love and for the Ververs' millions with his being. We of course recognize the profound Christian bias in this notion of a generosity which can be acknowledged only by a reenactment of the generous life. The freedom which Milly and Maggie give to

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Densher and to Amerigo has a beauty as terrifying as the spiritual luxury given to men by Christ's repudiation of the Law's constraints. The convenience of the world's laws is that they allow us to fabricate a self (and its relations) from our concessions and resistances to moral or material necessity. But a gift of total freedom — in James, the gift of mildness and money from his heroines — perhaps creates no terms for a relation except those of betrayal or emulation. The conquering passivity of Milly and of Maggie, their passion of sacrificial love, doesn't make any provision for the dialogue which inevitably compromises intimacy: Densher is never closer to Milly than when he can no longer speak to her, when, after her death, he trains himself in the quality of her spirit by trying to write the letter he will never see.

Milly's death, like Christ's crucifixion, announces the spectacular power of an embodied fiction celebrating human love, but it does so at the very moment when the body of love is removed from the world of human forms. *The Golden Bowl*, unlike *The Wings of the Dove,* succeeds in eliminating the crucificial aspect from the *imitatio christi.* The success, however, depends on what might be called the novel's strained unity of composition. Its plot, it's true, does not submit to the pressures of narrative speculation (as do elements of plot in *The Wings of the Dove*), but the conflicts among characters in *The Golden Bowl* are minimized by the excessive analogies they present with James's relation to his material. What we must perhaps finally see as the necessary defect of James's compositional ethic is the very coherence and unity into which those analogies between his fictional world and the process of creating it allow him to organize life. Conflict can be resolved in *The Golden Bowl* because of the *derivation* of conflict from the design which it threatens. The novel's theological bias is profoundly connected to James's imagination of life as a product of art: the "work" of the Ververs' marriages, like human history divinely inspired and controlled, returns to the original plan of a single creator. The accidental, the inessential and the incoherent are eliminated, and the "story" of human life finally appears secondary to the inspiration at its source. If human sin is nothing but a flaw introduced into the Creator's design, history itself, because it can never escape the logic of that design, may finally assent to stop being history and simply reenact in "eternity" the

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passion of the design. And if that hope is a sustaining fiction of religion, it is also, as James shows us, the truth of an artistic passion so intense that it works, most deeply, to destroy the very manifestations, the history, the text of its designs.

Maggie triumphs in *The Golden Bowl* because she has James's faith that her work will come back to her; it *depends* on her. The most intimate movement in the creation of her design is beyond its display, and it is pointed to when Amerigo, no longer the fine crystal, the *objet d'art* around which Maggie and her father can walk admiringly, participates in the *work* of art. He renounces the observation of forms in order to embrace them passionately. But *The Golden Bowl* has, of course, been all display, and the comparatively simple but poignant sacrifice of the work itself is the condition of Amerigo's redemption, of the sexual union introduced in the novel's conclusion. James's passionate fiction is sustained by the hope, finally realized in the last lines of *The Golden Bowl,* that the passion can dispense with the fiction. Perhaps only then is fiction invulnerable to the interpretations of criticism, for it has made a definitive retreat from the interpretative medium in which art is realized. The reward of that retreat, as Amerigo says, is that there is no longer anything to see beyond a love which the heavily appreciative text of *The Golden Bowl* has naturally been unable to express directly. Thus we see the inescapable ambiguity of a fiction so utterly released from the comfortable superstition of truth. The strength of James's uncompromising ethic of fiction finally requires a renunciation of that faculty to see (to criticize and to subvert) which, after all, protects us — and not simply in relation to art — from the tyranny of any community united in its assent to a single, insistent passion.

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Leonard Michaels

ISAAC

Talmudic scholar, master of cabala, Isaac felt vulnerable to a thousand misfortunes in New York, slipped on an icy street, lay on his back and wouldn't reach for his hat. People walked, traffic screamed, freezing damp sucked through his clothes. He let his eyes fall shut — no hat, no freezing, no slip, no street, no New York, no Isaac — and got a knock against the soles of his shoes. It shook his teeth. His eyes flashed open, darkness spread above him like a predatory tree, a dozen buttons glared and a sentence flew out, beak and claws, with a quality of moral sophistication indistinguishable from hatred: "What's-a-matta, fuckhead, too much vino?" He'd never heard of vino, but had a feeling for syntax — fuckhead was himself. He said, "Eat pig shit," the cop detected language, me-it became I-thou and the air between them a warm, viable medium. He risked English: "I falled on dot ice, tenk you."

The man in the next bed wasn't alive. Grey as a stone, hanging over the edge of the mattress, the head was grim to consider. But only a fool points out the obvious; Isaac wouldn't tell a nurse. Even so, he couldn't dismiss a head upside down, staring at him, and found himself crying. He had traveled thousands of miles to fall down like a fuckhead and lay beside a corpse. Crying loosened muscles. His shoulders began moving. Shoulders moving, he discovered arms moving, and if arms, why not legs? In his left leg moved thunder and lightning. But he sat up and shouted, "Sitting!" A nurse ripped open his pajamas and shoved in a bedpan. "I appreciate," he said, and defecated.

Before dawn he had dressed himself and was in the street. Stumbling, pressing into the dark as if pursued by dogs. More and more he tilted left and thus, beneath horrible pain, felt horrible geometry. His left leg was shorter than his right. He pressed into a phone booth. His sister screamed when she heard his voice. He told

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her what happened and she screamed, "Don't move." He sat in the booth, fell asleep, there was a knock and his eyes opened. She looked through the glass. "Katya," he said, "like a coffin." She wouldn't discuss the idea. Neither would Chaim, her husband, or Fagel, her husband's sister, or hunchback Yankel, the peddler, who asked where Isaac felt pain. In the back? In the leg? He remembered a fall in which he hurt his knee. Did Isaac's knee hurt? No? Very strange. How did a scholar, he wondered, fall in the street like an animal; but then what's one leg shorter compared to a brain concussion with blood bulging from the eyes? No comparison. Lucky Isaac. Isaac winked, made a little lucky nod, and collapsed. Fagel screamed. Katya screamed. Chaim gave Isaac his umbrella. Isaac pressed it with one hand. The other pressed his sister's arm. They went down the street together — Isaac, Katya, Fagel, Chaim, Yankel. Cracow, the chiropractor, had an office nearby.

To keep his mind off his stumbling torture, Katya told Isaac about Moisse, who wasn't lucky. He came to New York sponsored by a diamond merchant, friend of politicians, bon vivant, famous for witty exegeses of the Talmud. "So?" So as a condition of sponsorship, Moisse promised never to abandon, in New York, any tradition of the faith. He imagined no circumstances in which he might, but married, opened a dry-goods store and had a son. Circumstances arose in doctor bills. He had to do business on Saturdays. Isaac licked his lips. Chaim punched his chest. Yankel shrugged his hunch. "So?" So it followed, like the manifestation in the garden, that the merchant's beard hung in the door one Saturday. — "You know what day this is, Moisse?" What could he say? Isaac said, "Nothing. What could he say?" Chaim punched, Yankel shrugged. The beard nodded. The mouth hacked up a spittle, the spittle smacked the floor and the baby son was discovered on the prostrate body of his mother, shrieking like a demon while he ate the second nipple. Now Moisse doesn't do business on Saturday. His worst enemies won't say he isn't a saint.

"You got another story?"

"It's the only story I know."

"Tell me again," said Isaac.

Before she finished they were inside an old brownstone, looking up a high, narrow stairway. She tugged at the umbrella, but Isaac

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only looked, as if they were stairs in a dream. To be looked at, nothing else. What can you do in a dream? She tugged. He fell against a wall. She went up alone and came down with, "Doctor Cracow says." Isaac must walk up and lay face down on the chiropractor table. Otherwise go away and shrivel. In a week his leg would be a raisin. He could look forward to carrying it in his armpit. Fagel screamed, Chaim punched. They walked up.

Cracow stood suddenly erect, as if, the instant before, he had touched his toes. His fingers were stiff, quivering like the prongs of a rake. He nodded to the table. Isaac dropped onto it as if into an abyss and Cracow pummeled him from neck to tail, humming: *"Muss es sein. Es muss sein,"* then said, "Get up." With dreamlike speed they were at the brink of the stairs. A thing whooshed by, cracked, clattered to the landing. "Get it," said Cracow.

Isaac shook his head.

"Isaac, get it," said Katya. Chaim said, "Get it." Yankel said, "Get it, get it."

The umbrella was a streak of wood and cloth in another world. Isaac shook his head at the possibility of getting it. Beyond that, not getting it. Shaking his head, he started down. Not with delicate caution, like a man just crippled, but mechanical exactitude, like a man long crippled. Even in the bones of former incarnations, crippled, resigned to a thousand strictures. Cracow hummed, Isaac descended. Every step an accident succeeding an accident in a realm where perfection was grotesque. Cracow said, "No pain?"

Isaac stopped, gazed out; then, carefully, into his own center. Pain? His whole being was a question. It trembled toward yes or no and, like music, yes, very slightly, yes, he felt himself lift and fly above the stairs. Then he settled like dust. Cracow's voice shot through the air: "Six dollars, please." Isaac turned to fly up to him. With four wings clapping he was struck by stairs, smacked by walls, stopped by the ultimate, unyielding floor. He lay on his back. His eyes fell shut. Thumps accumulated down the stairs. Katya screamed. Yankel shrugged, Chaim whispered, "Dead?" Fagel screamed, Cracow said, "Could be dead." Chaim said, "Dead?" Fagel screamed, Katya screamed. "Dead? Dead?" said Yankel. Chaim said, "Not alive," and Yankel said, "Dead." Fagel screamed, screamed, screamed, screamed, screamed.

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Jack Newfield

CORPORATION OF SCHOLARS, LTD.

The International Association for Cultural Freedom, last known as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, held its first conference, last December 1-5, on the campus of Princeton University. The purpose of the meeting, according to an IACF press release, was to "discuss internal and external problems of the United States at a time when the new administration and its program will be in the process of formation."

To continue to bait the IACF because of its past covert complicity with a secret espionage agency would be McCarthyism of the Left. Besides, by belaboring an obvious point, it would miss a central one: the current moral and intellectual values of a group of writers and academics who now hold the franchise for, or let themselves be used by, the Association.

It is these implicit values and the men who believe in them which need to be scrutinized for their prejudices and presumptions. To put it simply, they are committed to authority rather than to change, to abstraction rather than io activism, to elites and technocrats rather than the needs of masses and minorities. Power rather than pain is what turns them on, and so their stress is upon optimism rather than dissatisfaction. With a corresponding allowance, of course, to those voices of dissatisfaction which have guaranteed to be ineffective but which will give them the newsworthy appearance of "really caring," really listening to the voices of dissent. They want to forget the past where it causes any embarrassment, pretend that the present is merely a passing phase, which technology will take care of, and that what we should really pay attention to is the future. To organize the future we need experts who should not be distracted from their work by any crying in the wilderness, particularly the wilderness of the Third World. It's the Atlantic alliance, and an

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implicit assumption about the necessities of NATO, which dominate their attention.

The most obvious way the IACF's biases revealed themselves was in the invitation list for the Princeton conference. The medium was the message. No one was present from Africa. No one was present from the Middle East. Minoo Masani, who was supposedly representing the intellectual opinion in India, was an enthusiast of America's Vietnam policy, but since this is a species nearly extinct even in our own country the conference managers should at least be congratulated in this case for their ingenuity. There were two impressive exile participants from Dubcek's Czechoslovakia — Eugen Loebl and Ivan Svitak — but no victims of American military interventionism. Juan Bosch was not invited. There was not even a dissident Buddhist monk there to explain what happens when American morality comes out of the barrel of a gun. The British representatives included no one connected with the protest against the alleged CIA subvention of *Encounter* — Spender was absent, so was Kermode, so were the people who tried to set up a magazine in opposition to *Encounter*, like Isaiah Berlin, Stuart Hampshire, Karl Miller and John Gross. Instead, the British representatives included the right-wing Labor M.P. Brian Walden and Alastair Buchan, the Director of the Institute of Strategic Studies and the editor of *NATO in the 1960's*. No Raymond Williams, no R. D. Laing, no Richard Titmuss.

The American foreign policy experts included many of those who were most wrong about Vietnam: John McCloy, Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, still carrying on about his technitronic society. Expected at any moment, and head of the Ford Foundation which lent financial support to the meeting, was McGeorge Bundy, who probably more than any other single person, was responsible for the decision to begin bombing North Vietnam in February of 1965. To represent the intellectual opinion in this country presumably against the war — were George Kennan, John Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, who have been representing the American intellectuals steadily at conferences for at least two decades. Sensitive enough to flee Caligula's court early in the catastrophe, Schlesinger and Galbraith are only now beginning to painfully re-think some of the assumptions and institutions that led to the war: globalism, counter-insurgency, nation-building, anti-communism. Uninvited to the meeting were the most prophetic and passionate critics of the war, *from the beginning*: people like Conor Cruise O'Brien, I. F. Stone, Howard Zinn and Paul Goodman. Such men could not have been counted on not to point out the

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standard anti-Communist liberalism of nearly all the participants. And that a certain kind of anti-Communist liberalism, personified by John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Walt Rostow, Dean Rusk, Robert McNamera, McGeorge Bundy, Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson and Averell Harriman — was indirectly responsible for the war in Vietnam. And anti-Communist liberalism is still the soul of IACF.

The style of thinking of the conference managers was exemplified by whom they invited to speak for the American young. The conference was held during the week that saw uncoordinated, *ad hoc* student demonstrations, sit-ins, protests, take-overs and riots on over thirty American college campuses, including such usually tranquil outposts as Pembroke and Fordham. The conference took place during the week when the new $12.00 Beatles album sold 200,000 copies, and when New York City was disrupted by a strike of high school students. I suspect the revolt of affluent American youth (now one must speak even of the affluent adolescents) is at least as significant as the interior military politics of NATO. The best of several new generations seems to be rejecting the root middle-class values of the culture — materialism, status, family, puritanism, religion, patriotism, liberalism. They are creating an adversary culture. They have been liberated by affluence, television, drugs, mobility and birth control pills. They don't want to live in split-level suburbia; they don't want to work for bureaucratic corporations, the government or Wall Street law firms; they don't want to make love according to the marriage manuals. This is new, and it is growing. As the *Berkeley Barb* said recently, "The high schools are uncontainable. Che Guevara is 13 years old, and he has stopped doing his homework."

But it wasn't the editor of the *Berkeley Barb,* or any representatives of SDS who were invited to discuss these phenomena. Or even older, sympathetic observers like Kenneth Kenniston or Edgar Friedenberg. Instead it was holders of youth establishment titles — the editors of *The Harvard Crimson* and the *Columbia Spectator,* and the president of NSA. I am not suggesting that New Left types should have dominated the conference. (Maybe, in fact, they would have found good reasons not even to attend if invited.) I am not saying that any of these worthies who were invited should not have been invited. I am saying that the activists and intellectuals associated with the New Left *should not have been systematically exiled,* especially since so many of the foreign delegates kept asking what the young radicals believe, what is their theory of change and what is their vision of the future. And I'm saying something else — that the discussion of any subject would

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have come to life if the Bells, Brzezinskis and Kennans had been challenged by informed radicals rather than by essentially mini- and sentimental ones.

On the second day of the conference I questioned Shepard Stone about the absence of Tom Hayden and Carl Oglesby. (Stone, the president of the IACF, is a former lieutenant with U.S. Army Intelligence, who, between 1954 and 1967, was director of International Affairs for the Ford Foundation.)

NEWFIELD: Can you explain why no representatives of the New Left are here?

STONE: Well, I've been out of the country for a while. I don't really know who is in the New Left. Martin Peretz is here. Doesn't he qualify?

NEWFIELD: I wouldn't think so. Peretz has recently attacked SDS, *Ramparts* and the Conference for New Politics, and he was finance chairman for Gene McCarthy.

STONE: Well, we did invite three Negroes. Although I'm afraid Mr. Hamilton didn't come.

One last point on the subject of the conference's form. Not a single American poet, painter, composer, architect or filmmaker was invited, a point effectively made by Lillian Hellman during the discussion. And the one advertised novelist — Saul Bellow — did not show up. This says something about the sensibility of IACF. They've elevated corporate and cold-war values above humanist and creative ones. They had the president of McGraw-Hill Publications but didn't invite Norman Mailer or Stanley Kubrick. They would rather invite Edwin Land, identified in the press handouts as a "corporation executive and inventor," than invite Robert Lowell, or Sontag or Bob Dylan. They would rather invite John Oakes, the editorial-page editor of the *New York Times* to insure friendly and generous coverage, than Norman O. Brown or Eldridge Cleaver.

Eldridge Cleaver! When I suggested to a British Labour Party M.P. at Princeton that Cleaver should have been there, he laughed. But Brecht would have understood why he laughed: "A man who laughs has simply not yet received the terrible news."

There were only a few days of hopeful history made during 1968, and they were not made by the government-university-foundation complex: the academic experts riding the gravy train of foundation grants, university lectureships and White House invitations. History was not made by the editor of *Commentary*, or the director of the Research Institute on Communist Affairs at Columbia, nor even by the president of NSA. Instead, it was made by apocalyptic, pot-smoking kids in

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New Hampshire and at Columbia. It was made by the desperate little guerrillas of the Vietcong who stormed the American Embassy at Saigon. It was made by the enraged black mothers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville, and by the Mexicans and Orientals in Cesar Chavez' fledgling union. These untitled, often uneducated and nonwhite activists have not tried to influence and counsel the administration by memo and conference. They have actually created history; they have proved great institutions like the Pentagon and the Democratic Party to be vulnerable. They have built new institutions and new myths, and they have retired an American President. Any serious conference in the future, that presumes to advise presidents and speak for greater cultural freedom, will have to seat some of those intellectuals who represent the victims and outsiders, themselves. One can no longer assume that a bunch of affluent, well-known conferees will speak for anyone except the institution of conferences. The decisive gift of an Albert Camus, or a George Orwell, or a Frantz Fanon or a James Agee was his ability to see reality through the eyes of its victims and casualties. This is also the gift of an Eldridge Cleaver, a Robert Coles, a Tom Hayden. And it was the central failure of the closed corporation of scholars who met at Princeton.

The conference itself was carefully structured so that those academics who most conformed to IACF's values tended to dominate the sessions and the press coverage. The speakers at the three dinner meetings were George Kennan, Eugen Loebl of Czechoslovakia, Henry Kissinger and Allard Lowenstein. Lowenstein was there as an ornament. Just as *Encounter,* even while one of its editors was an undercover CIA operative, still published a small quota of anti–cold-war pieces, the Princeton conference had its quota of people with some radical credentials who might just possibly cut up: Lillian Hellman, Stanley Hoffman, Martin Peretz, who was told that he'd been invited in order to cause a little trouble, Robert Jay Lifton and Sam Brown. Five out of one hundred. This proportion, about what *Encounter* used to allow, was probably instinctively figured out as proper and respectable. And, of course, it would have been uncool to invite Irving Kristol or Sidney Hook. The conference managers wanted to promote, not expose their politics, and to make the promotion appear like the necessary product of sharp but necessary brief encounters.

George Kennan spoke at the dinner meeting Monday night, still tracking down youth, a majority of which he thought was "floundering around in its own terrifying wilderness of drugs, pornography and political hysteria." If Kenneth Kenniston had been there he could have pointed out that fewer than ten percent of the seven million students

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in colleges have sampled LSD or marijuana, and he could have repeated what he's already written, that the "committed political activists are rarely intensive drug-users." But that sort of informed and activist opinion wasn't what was wanted, and so Kennan could go on to suggest a "drastic stiffening of public authority — the imposition of some sort of public discipline in areas of our life in which such discipline has never before been applied. . . ." Kennan concluded with a display of charity, not for the absent New Left, but for President-elect Richard Nixon: "Change, fortunately for us, is now in the air. We are in the midst of a great governmental transition. New faces are about to appear on the national scene; and it implies no disrespect for the old ones to believe that the appearance of new ones is a good thing and comes at a good time. . . . The new Administration must be given a fair opportunity to show what it can do. . . ."

Although Kennan had made many of the same points eleven months before in a famous *New York Times Magazine* article, the daily *Times,* in the impressed person of Mr. Oates, chose to publish the text of Kennan's remarks the next day. It was the only speech in all the world that week that the *Times* printed in full. But that's what the newspaper Establishment is — all that's print to fit.

Tuesday afternoon the conference had reached its nadir of majority irrelevance and minority frustration. As I sat through the afternoon session in Whig Hall, I began to imagine that the conference had been taken over by some satiric-minded Yippie body-snatchers. Like Daniel Bell rising to say that goals were not so important to the post–industrial society as means; an optimistic echo of his influential tract on the end of ideology. Bell, however, despite his zest for the future, also said that he had refused, on principle, to join a committee at Columbia on African Studies, since he had already served on committees for Latin American and Asian Studies.

A few minutes later, R. M. Soedjatmoko, an economist and the Indonesian Ambassador to the United States, began to speak "out of a deep sense of frustration." "This conference," he said, "is in danger of missing its purpose. The American crisis is larger than just the Negro. What is the New Left? What is its thrust? We have to know more about why the self-confidence of the liberal is faltering. The crisis in America is deeper than just the economic or political level. What is the nature of the malaise of suburbia? What do the underground churches mean? We have lulled ourselves at this conference, and permitted ourselves to speak only about familiar problems in familiar academic and social science language. We have to talk about the

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nature of irrationality. What is all this doubt and revolt in America really all about?"

To warm applause the Ambassador sat down, and requested the Americans to respond directly to his remarks. The conference cochairman, the stylish French editor and writer J. J. Servan-Schreiber, who traveled around the campus all week with three sexy secretaries and a limousine, looked around the room. All through the conference he called on people who were not prepared. A few minutes before, one of his pretties was whispering to him to call on Willie Morris, the editor of *Harper's*. (Morris said later: "The only reason I came was that they kept calling me up and saying Bob Manning was coming.") Morris had alertly read her lips and swiftly exited to the bar, presumably to work on the marvelous comic diary he was keeping of the week. So Servan-Schreiber called on the sociologist and author Edward Shils.

Shils began by complaining, in a compound of self-indulgent wit and resentment, about not being recognized earlier. Later in his eccentric, free-associating monologue, he would refuse to yield the floor. Since the conference managers could not supply a transcript of Shils' comments, and I cannot write as fast as he can talk, I was able to take note intermittently. What follows are only random icebergs of his thinking:

"I do not see this anguish you are talking about. But I am not a member of an underground church. . . . There is a loss of confidence among the third-class clergymen who dominate the American ecclesiastical system. They are feeble. They are no good. . . . I can't exhaust my views in less than five hours. I'm a left-over from a past period, so I have notes on something else. . . . Johnson got his wind up because the West Side kibbutz was attacking him. . . . The WASPS have abdicated. Who have taken their place? Ants. Fleas. . . . There are all these urchins in the streets enjoying themselves intimidating cowardly middle-class people. . . . The police have always been rough. What's this stuff about the Chicago police? So they beat up 800 young people. When I was young the police were really brutal. . . . The police are far more permissive now. Even soft. . . ."

When the chairman tried to call a halt to his monologue, Shils objected, saying "You got me into this."

"Many of the non-Americans don't understand what you're saying," Servan-Schreiber explained.

"Many of the Americans don't either," replied the professor.

There followed another half hour of academic push-up exercises, none of which even remotely satisfied the Indonesian's plea for reality and relevance. Then to climax the afternoon session, the chairman called

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on John McCloy, the seventy-two-year-old former Chairman of the Board of the Ford Foundation and the Chase Manhattan Bank, who in 1962 was formally nominated for chairman of the American Establishment by Richard Rovere. McCloy's appearance again struck me as a Yippie plot to parody Wall Street and State Department values intruding on a group concerned with "cultural freedom."

McCloy began with a jovial reminiscence about the two times in his life when he had been mugged. And then he tried his hand at a few ideas.

"Our condemnations of suburbia are overdrawn," he said. "I'm more impressed by the alertness to problems of that group, than I am by the drug addicts among the young. . . . I've been exposed lately to the colored movement, and I think progress is being made, despite the nihilism of the youth. . . . My bank used to employ hundreds of colored people. Now we employ thousands. . . . If we don't provide the leadership, where will it come from?"

I don't wish to be misunderstood. I'm not opposed to scholars or writers having relationship with state or political power, and I'm not advocating feeling and activism divorced from lucidity and tolerance. I'm not insinuating that the CIA had anything directly to do with IACF. What I am trying to say is that those intellectuals who control and ornament such an organization have acted in this instance to institutionalize commercial and cold-war values at the expense of creativity and engagement. Therefore I think they are engaged in something that betrays their responsibilities to act as antennae for their society. The phrase *"les trahisons des clercs"* may be too strong but I do not think it wholly inapplicable.

* A list of people who did not participate in the conference at Princeton appears on page 125.

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Leonard Cohen

LUGGAGE FIRE SALE

I flew to Paris two days early to get the homework done. There were no books where I lived and I had to read five by Mary McCarthy, four by Romain Gary, and about a thousand articles by Malcolm Muggeridge. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had set up a panel discussion with these three writers on "Is there a Crisis in Western Culture?" It was to be taped in a large gold room in the Hotel Napoleon and my job was Moderator. I was doing it for money, and to get out of a very sunny place where there were no books and no prospects and a couple of women who knew me too well.

I took a coffin-sized, coffin-colored room in the Hotel Cluny Square which is on the north-west corner of Blvd. St. Germain and Blvd. St. Michel. Expenses and a small gold room in the Hotel Napoleon could not be claimed for 48 hours. A wide varnished shelf about a foot above the bed ran the entire right angle of the corner into which the bed was fastened, and I knew that it would clip me every time I rose from the pillow.

All that remained of my travels in the East were a very small piece of Lebanese hashish and a complete suntan which recorded my major life success, the discovery of hot beaches where I could live naked with someone worth watching. I put the crumb of hash on the shelf beside two books which I had written, and I stretched the suntan out on the bed alongside a number of books from the American Library which I had not written. It was the middle of October, about 40 years too late for me to make history in Paris. I read their books quickly and carefully because one of the few pleasant things I could be in that situation was a professional. They were paying me 600 dollars.

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I started reading at seven or eight in the evening and I didn't get off the bed for 30 hours straight except to urinate in the sink which I expected to be cracked but which was brand-new. I went through nine books without eating or sleeping or smoking, and I was proud of myself for having located an area of pride in the midst of my dedicated hack research. Several years of blurred activity have made me expert in locating these areas, which must be occupied from time to time just to appease a human's appetite for landmarks. I've explored a lot of desolate beaches under that pressure. Not wanting to waste the hash on an alibi, I didn't smoke it for the reading, and I wouldn't use it for the broadcast. I would save the crumb for a surprise, but I was an agnostic when it came to surprises. As I acquainted myself with the three minds I was to follow through the western crisis, my work was compelled by the certainty that I wouldn't have known where to go had I been free, that I couldn't operate in Paris, that there was too much young Swedish sex going on without me. It was a discomfort, not of lust, but of feeling unlucky.

Once the maid came in to make the bed and was mildly happy to find I had not opened it. I watched her white bread-colored legs over the horizon of the page as she performed a few ritual dusting thrusts, recalling a pair of long, tanned, shaved wet legs which, miraculously, had come to bore me as thoroughly as the sand. The pleasure of the recollection derived from my acknowledgment that the girl mounted on those wet legs was, indeed, a beauty by any standard, that it was fine to have left her, that the sweetest aspect of her nature was the way she let me know that I could neither hurt or miss her. My concentration was so apparent that the maid left with a tiny apology. I write with a fountain pen, and under the shelf on the wall, I composed a very perishable aphorism in small italic script: *Change is the only aphrodisiac.*

For the sake of authority I drew a dash below the sentiment and attributed it to the Kama Sutra. I leave these things everywhere, lunatic fringe member of the Gideon Society. Maybe some salesman wondering why he is alone will read it.

At one in the morning I decided to break my fast. I was halfway through my last obligation to Romain Gary, a pocket edition of his autobiography, "Promise at Dawn." I tore away the unread half to take with me to a late café on Boul. Mich. I don't usually tear

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books. I guess I wanted to be as light as possible so that a wind could take me. I knew that I couldn't create the experience I wanted, so that like any motorless craft I had to depend on emptiness.

I forget the name of the café; it was on the left walking down, chrome-trimmed, mirrored, a jukebox full of American tunes. Ray Charles was favored and his hurt triumphant presence in the smoke seemed to sponsor and dignify the nocturnal sunglasses masking many of the young clientele. I was 29 that morning, a little older than everyone, and I knew that the 20-year-olds were better than I had ever been.

Senator McCarthy, Eisenhower, and Liberalism flourished when I was at college; we thought we were great just to resist, just to get laid. So much has opened up in those ten years, so many governments discredited. We hated ideology, but the discipline was still hatred. I'm still moving so I meet a lot of people younger than myself, and sometimes among them I feel like Margaret Sangster at an orgy, noble and irrelevant. I was glad to be hungry and light as I chose a leatherette bench and a round table that gave me a good view, glad that I had done my work and had nothing to tell anyone.

Because of the music and because I was American (albeit from Montreal), because I was curiously in need of comfort, I congratulated myself on being an emmisary of the dominant world culture. They were all wearing American sun-glasses, they were all trying to sit in the loose way Americans wait for violence in bars, they had all bought Hollywood and it served them right for 400 years of cultural intimidation. These heavy consolations ended my fast and my sense of lightness even before I ordered the tomato juice. It was all ego luggage and adventure avoids the ego, especially the little adventure of flesh which I knew could not happen while I drew these tedious maps. I knew but could not learn that the suffocation of armor is too high a price to pay for protection. There was some pain in these moments, and I must have displayed an attractive spiritual poverty, for when I looked up from the torn book, there was a girl staring at me.

She wore a black and white checked suit, white gloves, wide-collared white blouse, over-dressed for the place. Her hair was blonde but not the startling kind. She was sitting with three Algerian men, sitting rather at the edge of their conversation like a precarious prize,

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and they huddled forward to enliven their talk, baiting it with cocky indifference so as to invite and trap her in it. She stared at me in a way that said they had no claim on her, and I knew that if one of them had slept with her he had done it badly and risked punishment.

She was a very pretty girl to have stare at you in a big city at two in the morning, very well-dressed, an experienced 18-year-old who frequented Algerian beds perhaps, very Parisian in the way she used an expression of pain to convey interest, especially around the mouth. I was so suddenly happy to be stared at, delivered from my hack reading, so suddenly removed from the plot of the morning, that I laughed out with the delight of the elected. I committed some breach of the solemn inspection ritual which demands a mutual promotion of heroic voluntary solitude, and she laughed beautifully at our surprise. The obsolete conversation withered to silence and raised faces as she stood up, not more than five three, a very tiny waist which the tailoring advertised, and high heels without stockings. The upturned faces launched her in a special mist of bitchy triumph as she crossed to my table, their eyes on me before she got there. I did not know what her eyes were doing but her smile was gone as she stood rather militarily before me, inviting me not so much to inspect her as to benefit from a perfect example. I expected perfume but she smelled of soap, her nails very clean and pink, her hair had been wet an hour before and would be brighter when really brushed. She smelled of impatience, like white sheets rippling dry in the wind.

— I'd like some tomato juice.

— Help yourself.

— No, I'd like my own glass.

— All right. Sit down.

— No thank you.

She stood by the table until the glass came and she drank it standing up, scrutinized by everyone, a tight-rope act of grace because a snicker might have made a fool of her, or a slut. Even the jukebox was silent throughout the space of her risk. Then she abdicated the arena, sliding in beside me, the happiest spectator of the emotion she had herself created, which the ordinary diffusion of the café soon replaced. Her companions asked for their bill.

— That was very well done. You didn't even have to wipe your lips.

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— I like showing off.

— Your friends are leaving.

— They'll be waiting outside. They love being insulted.

— Why?

— For a lot of complicated reasons that have to do with blood and colonialism. I don't like talking to you because you want me to be witty, and that isn't what I hoped for.

— What did you hope for?

— You see? Goodnight.

— Stay with me. Come to my hotel, it's up the street.

— No.

— Then let's walk.

— I feel like going for a drive.

— I don't have a car.

— I do. I'll drive you.

Just from the point of view of the professional, I was glad to see that the Nouvelle Vague was creating real-life types, and that like any good style it was accessible in acceptable distortions to many people. From the point of view of the man she had stared at, I was in a fearful panic that she would walk away at any second and leave me with a number of authors I hadn't trusted for years.

She had parked her car on another block which we reached arm in arm, the three Algerians trailing us at distance of 20 feet or so, calling her name, Michele, Michele, over and over like children in a street-side singing game, an unexpectedly pleasant escort. We were sitting in the closed car when they hung their thin faces outside her window, arms around each others' shoulder. The two with free arms tapped at her window and she rolled it down. At close range they released mouthfuls of spit they had been saving. She rolled up the window and locked both our doors. Pulling out of the space as quickly as she could manage, she tried unsuccessfully to run them over.

She drove slowly, too slowly, through the little streets that bristle up from the river on the Left Bank, and soon there were five angry cars behind us, honking and headlights flicking. When she reached a street wide enough for passing she hugged it at dead center. I was unalarmed when a police car cut us off at an intersection. She was ordered to pull over and the accumulation of early morning cars stretched away. She showed her papers and in the brief interroga-

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tion I learned that her father was a doctor, that she was a medical student, and that she was 25. The honking having evaporated, her detention became less feasible, and the officer warned her to be sensible, and by the time she finished thanking him with serious politeness, he had almost apologized. When we were driving again I made her a proposal, pleased that there was no greed in my voice. Somehow she created a stage of detachment for everyone to act on, to act truly on. I also knew that she could never be humiliated.

— Look, I'm a writer and I'm here to . . .

— Published?

— Yes.

— I don't believe you.

— I'm in a very lousy hotel room right now, but tomorrow I'll be moving into the Hotel Napoleon, and I'll have some money. I want you to stay with me.

— How long?

— As long as you want.

— A week. Your tan will be gone in a week.

— Stay with me for a week then.

— Do you know why I said yes?

— No.

— Because I want to change my life.

— So do I.

— But I happen to be serious.

We drove silently to the Hotel Cluny Square and I thought that perhaps I would fall in love with her, things being so lucky. The sky was brightening, traffic thickening, and I wanted to fall asleep with someone I loved. She smelled of lemon soap, and she drove with a very straight back, her shoes on the seat between us because she liked to feel the pedals. Comfortable with good fortune, I must have relaxed too far, for some essential tension in the silence died, and I felt her impatience begin. She double-parked beside the gold-lettered door without killing the motor.

— I'm not coming up.

I wrinkled back her fresh skirt and dug my hand between her thighs. She did not turn, she watched the road as if she were still driving.

— Come upstairs, Michele. Let's forget about any contract for a week. Just come and spend the morning with me. I have a little

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piece of hashish, and we can smoke and talk or sleep if we want, and never mind the heroes we have to be, yes, change your life with someone else more important, let's just have a morning together for the sake of our curious friendship.

— I don't believe you have any hashish.

— God damn you!

I took one hand from her body and shot the other at the ignition key which I buried in the fist I waved between our faces.

— This is going up to my room. I'll give it to you up there or you can stay right here and push the car to wherever you want to go.

— Let me park at least.

— No.

— The morning is not going to please you.

— As far as I'm concerned it can't get any worse.

I climbed out, she set the emergency brake, gathered her shoes, sat in the open car door to put them on, and then we climbed the three flights up to the room which contained all the evidence with which I urgently needed to assail her disbelief.

I don't remember what her body was like. That four o'clock morning was two years ago, and the price I've paid for this story is to no longer believe that it happened, that I ever undressed her in the same careful manner with which she dressed, just as we keep the cotton that a jewel comes in, hanging her clothes over the back of the solitary chair, praising her at every stage. Certain sweet and minor plots of the memory should never be violated for they shrivel like picked poppies, but it is two years later today and I am trying to write myself out of another very sunny beach, trying to place these events in some expensive magazine.

As she entered the room she drew off her white gloves and folded them into a tight ball as if to expose as little of their surface as possible to the brown rotogravure light.

— These are my books, this and this, actual published books.

— I'm too lazy to read English. Nothing is going to change in this room, that I promise you.

— Are you too lazy to smoke some very fine Lebanese hashish?

She did not answer me and I thought I detected an instant of charity in her expression. We were standing too close in the tiny floor space, like two people trying to hear the same conversation in a telephone booth, and what we were listening to was another way

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the morning might have happened, but the air was jammed with the static of impatience.

Where was it? The shame of a lie reduced me to a childhood ordeal. The green crumb had disappeared from the shelf, and half my proof, there was no hashish to certify that I dreamed at some romantic expense.

— The woman must have knocked it off dusting.

— Do you mind getting off your knees?

I had been ready to search through the generations of sticky dust under the bed, and when I faced her a second later I knew I must not mention the thing again, or else display myself as a kind of cripple which I took pride in not being: hashish simply has never meant that much to me. I began to undress her, which was the only manly exit from my lie. When necessary she assisted me politely and that was the only deviation from her military indifference. She didn't have that inner-lighted translucent skin some blondes have, her shoulders were freckled, and her breasts were pointed like little honey pyramids, that is all I remember of her body. She allowed me to arrange her on the narrow bed but she gave nothing when I lay beside her, keeping her arms by her sides.

— I don't feel anything.

— Neither do I, and I don't expect anything.

My solitary orgasm waited for me easily but I did not want to claim it. It would have been a very minor oblivion and I was not willing to disarm for so short a flight, it would have been stolen charity and she would have watched me all the way, assuming total power in the second I was gone, and I suppose that an old habit insisted that I teach her something, or at least have my turn at teaching. She moaned unexpectedly and pulled me hard against the first thrust of her hips, and for a minute her small smooth body drew me through all the ritual of passion. Then she relaxed abruptly.

— I was just faking.

— That's fine. Don't destroy your record with something genuine.

— Now you're faking. Move, I want to get dressed.

After she had adjusted her wide white collar and smoothed down her skirt she picked up my two books from the shelf. I had got into bed, arms beneath the covers, seized with anger. I promised myself that I would not speak another word to her, that was all the mystery

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I could dredge up to glorify my anger, that was all the style I could manage.

— Why should I believe that you wrote these? I don't know your name and they haven't any jackets with your picture. From their dirty edges I'd say that you carry these books everywhere.

I thought of shoving my passport at her but that would have been like poking in the dust under the bed. The books were traditionally slim and she had no trouble tearing off the covers and peeling a few pages from the broken spines. I thought of beating her but I did not like the picture of a nude man beating a well-dressed woman, and also for a flash I thought I'd seized the cheap solution to her sexuality, that she'd enjoy being beaten, but even if it were true, it was only self-control at the moment.

— Can I use your brush? Of course, you aren't talking.

She brushed her hair briskly without once consulting the mirror, and with some diffidence she went into my trousers and extracted her car keys.

— Goodbye, aren't you going to say goodbye? But you must. We haven't hurt each other. I don't like leaving rooms without being told goodbye. No?

Bathed in hatred I listened to her go down the stairs. My small victory in silence was the prize I took to sleep, she always made you think of prizes, that's what she did to the greedy. It was an uncomfortable hatred she left me with, not outgoing enough to dissipate itself, not inward enough for a poem. Sleep came quickly like a dunce's award for effort; after five minutes it was interrupted by an incessant horn sounding below my window. She's forgotten her gloves. She wants to apologize. She wants to start over. She's in trouble on the street, the Algerians. I banged my forehead getting out of bed and I cursed my whole predicament. I pushed open the stiff windows. There was a very pretty girl at the wheel of a small French car waving goodbye to me, smiling perfectly, a pure salutation that referred to nothing, and there was nothing for me to do but wave back at her, then she rolled up the glass and drove away quickly, leaving me once again with that big grin of election which she had loved first.

Hydra, Greece. 1964

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hans magnus enzensberger

THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF THE MIND

All of us, no matter how irresolute we are, like to think that we reign supreme in our own awareness, that we are masters of what our minds accept or reject. Since the Soul is not much mentioned any more, except by priests, poets and pop musicians, the last refuge a man can take from the catastrophic world at large seems to be his own mind. Where else can he expect to withstand the daily siege, if not within himself? Even under the conditions of totalitarian rule, where no one can fancy any more that his home is his castle, the mind of the individual is considered a kind of last citadel and hotly defended, though this imaginary fortress may have been long since taken over by an ingenious enemy.[1]

No illusion is more stubbornly upheld than the sovereignty of the mind. It is a good example of the impact of philosophy on people who ignore it; for the idea that men can "make up their minds" individually and by themselves is essentially derived from the tenets of bourgeois philosophy: secondhand Descartes, run-down Husserl, armchair idealism; and all it amounts to is a sort of metaphysical do-it-yourself.

We might do worse, I think, than dust off the admirably laconic statement which one of our classics has made more than a century ago: "What is going on in our minds has always been, and will always be, a product of society."[2] This is a comparatively recent insight. Though

1. This delusion became painfully apparent during the Nazi régime in Germany, when many intellectuals thought it sufficient to retreat into "inner emigration," a posture which turned out to mean giving in to the Nazis. There have been similar tendencies in Communist countries during the reign of Stalinism. See Czeslaw Milosz's excellent study, *The Captive Mind* (London, 1953).
2. Karl Marx, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, I (Teil, 1845-46).

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it is valid for all human history ever since the division of labor came into being, it could not be formulated before the times of Karl Marx. In a society where communication was largely oral, the dependence of the pupil on the teacher, the disciple on the master, the flock on the priest was taken for granted. That the few thought and judged and decided for the many was a matter of course and not a matter for investigation. Medieval man was probably otherdirected to an extent which our sociology would be at a loss to fathom. His mind was, to an enormous degree, fashioned and processed from "without." But the business of teaching and of indoctrination was perfectly straightforward and transparent — so transparent indeed that it became invisible as a problem. Only when the processes which shape our minds became opaque, enigmatic, inscrutable for the common man, only with the advent of industrialization did the question of how our minds are shaped arise in earnest.

The mind-making industry is really a product of the last hundred years. It has developed at such a pace, and assumed such varied forms, that it has outgrown our understanding and our control. Our current discussion of the "media" seems to suffer from severe theoretical limitations. Newsprint, films, television, public relations tend to be evaluated separately, in terms of their specific technologies, conditions and possibilities. Every new branch of the industry starts off a new crop of theories.[3] Hardly anyone seems to be aware of the phenomenon as a whole: the industrialization of the human mind. This is a process which cannot be understood by a mere examination of its machinery.

Equally inadequate is the term *cultural industry* which has become common usage in Europe after World War II. It reflects, more than the scope of the phenomenon itself, the social status of those who have tried to analyse it: university professors and academic writers: people whom the power elite has relegated to the reservations of what passes

3. A good example is the current wave of McLuhanism. No matter how ingenious, no matter how shrewd and fresh some of this author's observations may seem, his understanding of media hardly deserves the name of a theory. His cheerful disregard of their social and political implications is pathetic. It is all too easy to see why the slogan "The medium is the message" has met with unbounded enthusiasm on the part of the media, since it does away, by a quick fix worthy of a card-sharp, with the question of truth. Whether the message is a lie or not has become irrelevant, since in the light of McLuhanism truth itself resides in the very existence of the medium, no matter what it may convey: the proof of the network is in the network. It is a pity that Goebbels has not lived to see this redemption of his *oeuvre*.

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as "cultural life" and who consequently have resigned themselves to bear the unfortunate name of cultural critics. In other words, they are certified as harmless; they are supposed to think in terms of *Kultur* and not in terms of power.

Yet the vague and insufficient name *cultural industry* serves to remind us of a paradox inherent in all media work. Consciousness, however false, can be induced and reproduced by industrial means, but it cannot be industrially produced. It is a "social product" made up by people: its origin is the dialogue. No industrial process can replace the persons who generate it. And it is precisely this truism of which the archaic term "culture" tries, however vainly, to remind us. The mind industry is monstrous and difficult to understand because it does not, strictly speaking, produce anything. It is an intermediary, engaged only in production's secondary and tertiary derivatives, in transmission and infiltration, in the fungible aspect of what it multiplies and delivers to the customer.

The mind industry can take on anything, digest it, reproduce it and pour it out. Whatever our minds can conceive of is grist to its mill; nothing will leave it unadulterated: it is capable of turning any idea into a slogan and any work of the imagination into a hit. This is its overwhelming power, yet it is also its most vulnerable spot: it thrives on a stuff which it cannot manufacture by itself. It depends on the very substance it must fear most, and must suppress what it feeds on: the creative productivity of people. Hence the ambiguity of the term cultural industry, which takes at face value the claims of culture, in the ancient sense of the word, and the claims of an industrial process which has all but eaten it up. To insist on these claims would be naïve; to criticize the industry from the vantage point of a "liberal education" and to raise comfortable outcries against its vulgarity will neither change it nor revive the dead souls of culture: it will merely help to fortify the ghettoes of educational programs and to fill the backward, highbrow section of the Sunday papers. At the same time, the indictment of the mind industry on purely aesthetic grounds will tend to obscure its larger social and political meaning.

On the other extreme we find the ideological critics of the mind industry. Their attention is usually limited to its role as an instrument of straightforward or hidden political propaganda, and from the messages reproduced by it they try to distill the political content. More often than not, the underlying understanding of politics is extremely narrow, as if it were just a matter of taking sides in everyday contests of power. Just as in the case of the "cultural critic," this attitude can

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not hope to catch up with the far-reaching effects of the industrialization of the mind, since it is a process which will abolish the distinction between private and public consciousness.

Thus, while radio, cinema, television, recording, advertising and public relations, new techniques of manipulation and propaganda, are being keenly discussed, each on its own terms, the mind industry, taken as a whole, is disregarded. Newsprint and publishing, its oldest and in many respects still its most interesting branch, hardly comes up for serious comment any longer, presumably because it lacks the appeal of technological novelty. Yet much of the analysis provided in Balzac's *Illusions Perdues* is as pertinent today as it was hundred years ago, as any copywriter from Hollywood who happens to know the book will testify. Other, more recent branches of the industry still remain largely unexplored: fashion and industrial design, the propagation of established religions and of esoteric cults, opinion polls, simulation and, last but not least, tourism, which can be considered as a mass medium in its own right.

Above all, however, we are not sufficiently aware of the fact that the full deployment of the mind industry still lies ahead. Up to now it has not managed to seize control of its most essential sphere, which is education. The industrialization of instruction, on all levels, has barely begun. While we still indulge in controversies over curricula, school systems, college and university reforms and shortages in the teaching professions, technological systems are being perfected which will make nonsense of all the adjustments we are now considering. The language laboratory and the short-circuit TV are only the forerunners of a fully industrialized educational system which will make use of increasingly centralized programming and of recent advances in the study of learning. In tht process, education will become a mass media, the most powerful of all, and a billion-dollar business.

Whether we realize it or not, the mind industry is growing faster than any other, not excluding armament. It has become the key industry of the twentieth century. Those who are concerned in the power game of today, political leaders, intelligence men and revolutionaries, have very well grasped this crucial fact. Whenever an industrially developed country is occupied or liberated today, whenever there is a coup d'état, a revolution, or a counterrevolution, the crack police units, the paratroopers, the guerrilla fighters do not any longer descend on the main squares of the city or seize the centers of heavy industry, as in the nineteenth century, or symbolic sites like the royal palace: the new régime will instead take over, first of all, the radio and television

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stations, the telephone and telex exchanges and the printing presses. And after having entrenched itself, it will, by and large, leave alone those who manage the public services and the manufacturing industries, at least in the beginning, while all the functionaries who run the mind industry will be immediately replaced. In such extreme situations the industry's key position becomes quite clear.

There are four conditions which are necessary to its existence; briefly, they are as follows:

1.) Enlightenment, in the broadest sense, is the philosophical prerequisite of the industrialization of the mind. It cannot get under way until the rule of theocracy, and with it people's faith in revelation and inspiration, in the Holy Book or the Holy Ghost as taught by the priesthood, is broken. The mind industry presupposes independent minds, even when it is out to deprive them of their independence; this is another of its paradoxes. The last theocracy to vanish has been Tibet; ever since, the philosophical condition is met with throughout the world.

2.) Politically, the industrialization of the mind presupposes the proclamation of human rights, of equality and liberty in particular. In Europe, this threshold has been passed by the French Revolution; in the Communist world, by the October Revolution; and in America, Asia and Africa, by the wars of liberation from colonial rule. Obviously, the industry does not depend on the realization of these rights; for most people, they have never been more than a pretense, or at best, a distant promise. On the contrary, it is just the margin between fiction and reality which provides the mind industry with its theater of operations. Consciousness, both individual and social, has become a political issue only from the moment when the conviction arose in people's minds that everyone should have a say in his own destiny as well as in that of society at large. From the same moment any authority had to justify itself in the eyes of those it would govern; coercion alone would no longer do the trick; he who ruled must persuade, lay claim to people's minds and change them, in an industrial age, by every industrial means at hand.

3.) Economically, the mind industry cannot come of age unless a measure of primary accumulation has been achieved. A society which cannot provide the necessary surplus capital neither needs it, nor can afford it. During the first half of the nineteenth century in Western Europe, and under similar conditions in other parts of the world, which prevailed until fairly recently, peasants and workers lived at a level of bare subsistence. During this stage of economic development the

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fiction that the working class was able to determine the conditions of its own existence is meaningless; the proletariat is subjected by physical constraint and undisguised force. Archaic methods of manipulation, as used by the school and by the church, the law and the army, together with old customs and conventions, are quite sufficient for the ruling minority to maintain its position during the earlier stages of industrial development. As soon as the basic industries have been firmly established and the mass production of consumer goods is beginning to reach out to the majority of the population, the ruling classes will face a dilemma. More sophisticated methods of production demand a constantly rising standard of education, not only for the privileged but also for the masses. The immediate compulsion which kept the working class "in their place" will slowly decrease. Working hours are reduced, and the standard of living rises. Inevitably, people will become aware of their own situation; they can now afford the luxury of having a mind of their own. For the first time, they become conscious of themselves in any fuller than the most primitive and hazy sense of the word. In this process, enormous human energies are released, energies which inevitably threaten the established political and economic order. Today this revolutionary process can be seen at work in a great number of emergent nations, where it has long been artificially retarded by imperialist powers; in these countries the political, if not the economic conditions for the development of mind industries can be realized overnight.[4]

4.) Given a certain level of economic development, industrialization brings with it the last condition for the rise of a mind industry: the technology on which it depends. The first industrial uses of electricity were concerned with power and not with communications: the dynamo and the electrical motor preceded the amplifying valve and the film camera. There are economical reasons for this time lag: the foundations of radio, film, recording, television and computing techniques could not be laid before the advent of the mass production of commodities and the general availability of electrical power.

In our time the technological conditions for the industrialization of the mind exist anywhere on the planet. The same cannot be said for the political and economic prerequisites; however, it is only a matter of time until they will be met. The process is irreversible. There-

4. The importance of the transistor radio in the Algerian revolution has been emphasized by Franz Fanon, and the role of television in the political life of Castro's Cuba is a matter of common knowledge.

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fore all criticism of the mind industry which is abolitionist in its essence is inept and beside the point, since the idea of arresting and liquidating industrialization itself (which such criticism implies) is suicidal. There is a macabre irony to any such proposal, for it is indeed no longer a technical problem for our civilization to abolish itself. However, this is hardly what conservative critics have in mind when they complain about the loss of "values," the depravity of mass civilization and the degeneration of traditional culture by the media. The idea is, rather, to be away with all these nasty things, and to survive, as an elite of happy pundits, in the nicer comforts offered by a country house.

Nonetheless, the workings of the mind industry have been analysed, in part, over and over again, sometimes with great ingenuity and insight. So far as the capitalist countries are concerned the critics have leveled their attacks mainly against the newer media and commercial advertising. Conservatives and Marxists alike have been all too ready to deplore their venial side. It is an objection which hardly touches the heart of the matter. Apart from the fact that it is perhaps no more immoral to profit from the mass-production of news or symphonies than from the mass-production of soap and tires, objections of this kind overlook the very characteristics of the mind industry. Its more advanced sectors have long since ceased to sell any goods at all. With increasing technological maturity, the material substrata, paper or plastic or celluloid, tend to vanish. Only in the more old-fashioned offshoots of the business, as for example in the book trade, does the commodity aspect of the product play an important economic role. In this respect, a ratio station has nothing in common with a match factory. With the disappearance of the material substratum the product becomes more and more abstract, and the industry depends less and less on selling it to its customers. If you buy a book, you pay for it in terms of its real cost of production; if you pick up a magazine, you pay only a fraction thereof; if you tune in on a radio or television program, you get it virtually free; direct advertising and political propaganda is something nobody buys — on the contrary, it is crammed down our throats. The products of the mind industry can no longer be understood in terms of a sellers' and buyers' market, or in terms of production costs: they are, as it were, priceless. The capitalist exploitation of the media is accidental and not intrinsic; to concentrate on their commercialization is to miss the point and to overlook the specific service which the mind industry performs for modern societies. This service is essentially the same all over the world, no matter how

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the industry is operated: under state, public or private management, within a capitalist or a socialist economy, on a profit or nonprofit basis. The mind industry's main business and concern is not to sell its product: it is to "sell" the existing order, to perpetuate the prevailing pattern of man's domination by man, no matter who runs the society, and by what means. Its main task is to expand and train our consciousness — in order to exploit it.

Since "immaterial exploitation" is not a familiar concept, it might be well to explain its meaning. Classical Marxism has defined very clearly the material exploitation to which the working classes have been subjected ever since the industrial revolution. In its crudest form, it is a characteristic of the period of the primary accumulation of capital. This holds true even for Socialist countries, as is evident from the example of Stalinist Russia and the early stages of the development of Red China. As soon as the bases of industrialization are laid, however, it becomes clear that material exploitation alone is insufficient to guarantee the continuity of the system. When the production of goods expands beyond the most immediate needs, the old proclamations of human rights, however watered down by the rhetoric of the establishment and however eclipsed by decades of hardship, famine, crises, forced labor and political terror, will now unfold their potential strength. It is in their very nature that, once proclaimed, they cannot be revoked. Again and again, people will try to take them at their face value and, eventually, to fight for their realization. Thus, ever since the great declarations of the eighteenth century, every rule of the few over the many, however organized, has faced the threat of revolution. Real democracy, as opposed to the formal façades of parliamentary democracy, does not exist anywhere in the world, but its ghost haunts every existing régime. Consequently, all the existing power structures must seek to obtain the consent, however passive, of their subjects. Even régimes which depend on the force of arms for their survival feel the need to justify themselves in the eyes of the world. Control of capital, of the means of production and of the armed forces is therefore no longer enough. The self-appointed élites who run modern societies must try to control people's minds. What each of us accepts or rejects, what we think and decide is now, here as well as in Vietnam, a matter of prime political concern: it would be too dangerous to leave these matters to ourselves. Material exploitation must camouflage itself in order to survive: immaterial exploitation has become its necessary corollary. The few cannot go on accumulating wealth unless they accumulate the power to manipulate the minds of the many. To expro-

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priate manpower they have to expropriate the brain. What is being abolished in today's affluent societies, from Moscow to Los Angeles, is not exploitation, but our awareness of it.

It takes quite a lot of effort to maintain this state of affairs. There are alternatives to it. But since all of them would inevitably overthrow the prevailing powers, an entire industry is engaged in doing away with them, eliminating possible futures and reinforcing the present pattern of domination. There are several ways to achieve this end: on the one hand we find downright censorship, bans and a state monopoly on all the means of production of the mind industry; on the other hand, economic pressures, systematic distribution of "punishment and reward" and human engineering can do the job just as well and much more smoothly. The material pauperization of the last century is followed and replaced by the immaterial pauperization of today. Its most obvious manifestation is the decline in political options available to the citizen of the most advanced nations: a mass of political nobodies, over whose heads even collective suicide can be decreed, is opposed by an ever decreasing number of political moguls. That this state of affairs is readily accepted and voluntarily endured by the majority is the greatest achievement of the mind industry.

To describe its effects on present-day society is not, however, to describe its essence. The emergence of the textile industry has ruined the craftsman of India and caused widespread child labor in England, but these consequences do not necessarily follow from the existence of the mechanical loom. There is no more reason to suppose that the industrialization of the human mind must produce immaterial exploitation. It would even be fair to say that it will eventually, by its own logic, do away with the very results it has today. For this is the most fundamental of all its contradictions: in order to obtain consent, you have to grant a choice, no matter how marginal and deceptive; in order to harness the faculties of the human mind, you have to develop them, no matter how narrowly and how deformed. It may be a measure of the overwhelming power of the mind industry that none of us can escape its influence. Whether we like it or not, it enlists our participation in the system as a whole. But this participation may very well veer, one day, from the passive to the active, and turn out to threaten the very order it was supposed to uphold. The mind industry has a dynamic of its own which it cannot arrest, and it is not by chance but by necessity that in this movement there are currents which run contrary to its present mission of stabilizing the status quo. A corollary of its dialectical progress is that the mind industry, however closely super-

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vised in its single operations, is never completely controllable as a whole. There are always leaks in it, cracks in the armor; no administration will ever trust it all the way.[5]

In order to exploit people's intellectual, moral and political faculties, you have got to develop them first. This is, as we have seen, the basic dilemma faced by today's media. When we turn our attention from the industry's consumers to its producers, the intellectuals, we find this dilemma aggravated and intensified. In terms of power, of course, there can be no question as to who runs the business. Certainly it is not the intellectuals who control the industrial establishment, but the establishment which controls them. There is precious little chance for the people who are productive to take over their means of production: this is just what the present structure is designed to prevent. However, even under present circumstances, the relationship is not without a certain ambiguity, since there is no way of running the mind industry without enlisting the services of at least a minority of men who can create something. To exclude them would be self-defeating. Of course, it is perfectly possible to use the whole stock of accumulated original work and have it adapted, diluted and processed for media use, and it may be well to remember that much of what purports to be new is in fact derivative. If we examine the harmonic and melodic structure of any popular song hit, it will most likely turn out to employ inventions of serious composers centuries ago. The same is true of the dramaturgical clichés of mediocre screenplays: watered down beyond recognition, they repeat traditional patterns taken from the drama and the novel of the past. In the long run, however, the parasitic use of inherited work is not sufficient to nourish the industry. However large a stock, you cannot sell out forever without replenishment; hence the need "to make it new," the media's dependence on men capable of innovation, in other words, on potential troublemakers. It is inherent in the process of creation that there is no way to predict its results. Consequently, intellectuals are, from the point of view of any power structure bent on its own perpetuation, a security risk. It takes consummate skill to "handle" them and to neutralize their subversive influence. All

5. A good example of this instinctive sense of insecurity shared by the most entrenched political powers is offered by Senator Joseph McCarthy's lunatic crusade against Hollywood producers, actors and writers. Most of them had shown an abject loyalty to the demands of the industry throughout their career, and yet no abnegation of their talents could free them from suspicion. Much in the same way, Stalin never trusted even his most subservient trustees of the intellectual establishment.

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sorts of techniques, from the crudest to the most sophisticated, have been developed to this end: physical threat, blacklisting, moral and economic pressure on the one hand, overexposure, star-cult, cooptation into the power élite on the other, are the extremes of a whole gamut of manipulation. It would be worthwhile to write a manual analysing these techniques. They have one thing in common, and that is that they offer short-term, tactical answers to a problem which, in principle, cannot be resolved. This is an industry which has to rely, as its primary source, on the very minorities with whose elimination it is entrusted: those whose aim it is to invent and produce *alternatives*. Unless it succeeds in exploiting and manipulating its producers, the mind industry cannot hope to exploit and manipulate its consumers. On the level of production even more than on the level of consumption, it has to deal with partners who are potential enemies. Engaged in the proliferation of human consciousness, the media proliferate their own contradictions.

Criticism of the mind industry which fails to recognize its central ambiguities is either idle or dangerous. It is a measure of their limitations that many media critics never seem to reflect on their own position, just as if their work were not itself a part of what it criticizes. The truth is that no one can nowadays express any opinion at all without making use of the industry, or rather, without being used by it.[6]

Anyone incapable of dialectical thinking is doomed as soon as he starts grappling with this subject. He will be trapped to a point where even retreat is no longer possible. There are many who feel revolted at the thought of entering a studio or negotiating with the slick executives who run the networks. They detest, or profess to detest, the very machinery of the industry, and would like to withdraw into some abode of refinement. Of course, no such refuge really exists. The seemingly exclusive is just another, slightly more expensive line of styling within the same giant industrial combine.

Let us rather try to draw the line between intellectual integrity and defeatism. To opt out of the mind industry, to refuse any dealings with it may well turn out to be a reactionary course. There is no hermitage left for those whose job is to speak out and to seek innovation. Retreat from the media will not even save the intellectual's precious soul from corruption. It might be a better idea to enter the dangerous game, to take and calculate our risks. Instead of innocence, we need

6. Among those who blithely disregard this fact I would mention some European philosophers, for example Romano Guardini, Max Picard and Ortega y Gasset. In America, this essentially conservative stand has been emulated by Henry Miller and a number of Beat Generation writers.

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determination. We must know very precisely the monster we are dealing with, and we must be continually on our guard to resist the overt or subtle pressures which are brought to bear on us.

The rapid development of the mind industry, its rise to a key position in modern society, has profoundly changed the role of the intellectual. He finds himself confronted with new threats and new opportunities. Whether he knows it or not, whether he likes it or not, he has become the accomplice of a huge industrial complex which depends for its survival on him, as he depends on it for his own. He must try, at any cost, to use it for his own purposes, which are incompatible with the purposes of the mind machine. What it upholds he must subvert. He may play it foul or straight, he may win or lose the game; but he would do well to remember that there is more at stake than his own fortune.

(*Translated from the German by the author.*)

An Announcement

PR is going to print several poems by one poet in each issue—as we've been trying to do recently—rather than single poems by a number of poets. Exceptions, of course, are bound to occur.

—The Editors

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Richard Burgin

A CONVERSATION WITH BORGES

INTERVIEWER: Your stories almost always have their source in other works of literature or in philosophical concepts, for example, "Pierre Menard." I wonder how you feel about that story.

BORGES: You know, that was the first story I wrote. But it's not wholly a story . . . it's a kind of essay, and then I think that in that story I think you get a feeling of tiredness and scepticism, no? Because you feel of Menard as coming at the end of a very long literary period, and he comes to the moment when he finds he doesn't want to encumber the world with any more books. And that, although his fate is to be a literary man, he's not out for fame. He's writing for himself and he decides to do something very, very unobstrusive, he'll rewrite a book that is already there, no? — and very much there, *Don Quixote*. And then of course that story has the idea, what I said in my first Lecture here, that every time a book is read or reread, then something happens to the book, no?

INTERVIEWER: It becomes modified.

BORGES: Yes modified, and every time you read it, it's really a new experience.

INTERVIEWER: As you see the world's literature as constantly changing, as continuously being modified by time, does this make you feel a sense of futility about creating so-called original works of literature?

BORGES: But not only futility, I see it as something living and growing. I think of the world's literature as a kind of forest; I mean, it's tangled and it entangles us but it's growing. Well, to come back to my inevitable image of a labyrinth, well, it's a living labyrinth, no? A living maze. Perhaps the word labyrinth is more mysterious than the word maze, no?

INTERVIEWER: Maze is almost too mechanical a word.

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BORGES: Yes, and you feel the "amazement" in the word. With labyrinth you think of Crete and you think of the Greeks. While in maze you may think of Hampton Court, well not very much of a labyrinth, a kind of toy labyrinth.

INTERVIEWER: What about "Emma Zunz?" That's a story of a living labyrinth.

BORGES: It's very strange, because in a story like "The Immortal" I did my best to be magnificent, while the story "Emma Zunz" is a very drab story, a very gray story, and even the name Emma was chosen because I thought it particularly ugly, but not strikingly ugly, no? And the name Zunz is a very poor name.

INTERVIEWER: But one still feels compassion for her. I mean she is a kind of tool of Destiny.

BORGES: Yes, she's a tool of Destiny, but I think there's something very mean about Revenge, even a just revenge, no? Something futile about it. I dislike revenge. I think that the only possible revenge is forgetfulness, oblivion. That's the only revenge. But, of course, oblivion makes for forgiving, no?

INTERVIEWER: Well, I know you don't like revenge, and I don't think you lose your temper much either, do you?

BORGES: I've been angry perhaps — I'm almost 70. I feel I've been angry four or five times in my life, not more than that.

INTERVIEWER: That's remarkable. You were angry at Perón certainly.

BORGES: Yes. That was different.

INTERVIEWER: Of course.

BORGES: One day when I was speaking about Coleridge I remember four students walked into my class and told me that a decision had been taken by an assembly for a strike and they asked me to stop my lecturing. And then I was taken aback and suddenly I found that without knowing it I had walked from this side of the room to the other, that I was facing those four young men, telling them that a man may make a decision for himself but not for other people, and that were they crazy enough to think that I would stand that kind of nonsense. And then they stared at me because they were astounded at my taking it in that way. Of course I realized that I was an elderly man, half blind, and they were four hefty, four husky young men, but I was so angry that I said to them, "Well, as there are many ladies here, if you have anything more to say to me, let's go out on the street and have it out."

INTERVIEWER: You said that?

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BORGES: Yes, and then, well, they walked away and then I said, "Well, after this interlude, I think we may go on." And then I was rather ashamed of having shouted, and of having felt so angry. That was one of the few times in my life that thing has happened to me.

INTERVIEWER: How long ago was this?

BORGES: This must have been some five years ago. And then the same sort of thing happened twice again, and I reacted much in the same way, but afterwards I felt very, very much ashamed of it.

INTERVIEWER: This was a strike against the university?

BORGES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What were they striking for?

BORGES: They were striking because there was a strike among the laborers in the port and they thought the students had to join them. But I always think of strikes as a kind of blackmail, no? I wonder what you think about it?

INTERVIEWER: Students are often striking in this country. Do you know that?

BORGES: In my country also. That they should do it is right, but that they should prevent other people from going to classes, I don't understand; that they should try to bully me? And then I said, well if they knock me down, that doesn't matter, because after all the issue of a fight is of no importance whatever. What is important is that a man should not let himself be bullied, don't you think so? After all, what happens to me is not important because nobody thinks that I'm a prizefighter or that I'm any good at fighting. What is important is that I should not let myself be bullied before my students, because if not, they won't respect me, and I won't respect myself.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes values, then, are even more important than one's well-being?

BORGES: Oh yes, of course. After all one's well-being is physical, and as I don't think physical things are very real, of course — they are real, if you fall off a cliff that's quite real, but in that case I thought that whatever happens to me is quite trifling, utterly trifling. Of course they were trying to bluff me, because I don't think they had any idea of being violent. But that was one of the few times in my life I've been really angry. And then I was very much ashamed of the fact. I felt that, after all, as a Professor, as a man of letters, I shouldn't have been angry, I should have tried to reason with them, instead of saying to them, "well come on and have it out," because after all I was behaving in much the same way as they were.

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INTERVIEWER: This reminds me a little bit of "The South."

BORGES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I think that's one of your most personal stories.

BORGES: Yes, it is.

INTERVIEWER: The idea of bravery means a lot to you, doesn't it?

BORGES: I think it does because I'm not brave myself. I think if I were really brave it wouldn't mean anything to me. For example, I've been ducking a dentist for a year or so. I'm not personally brave and as my father and my grandfather and my great-grandfather were personally brave men, I mean some of them fell in action. . . .

INTERVIEWER: You don't think writing is a kind of bravery?

BORGES: It could be, yes. But perhaps if I were personally brave I wouldn't care so much about bravery. Because, of course, what one cares for is what one hasn't got, no?

INTERVIEWER: Right.

BORGES: I mean if a person loves you, you take it for granted, and you may even get tired of her. But if you are jilted, you feel that the bottom is out of the universe, no?

INTERVIEWER: You say people should be ashamed of anger, but you don't think people should be ashamed of this; of "what to make of a diminished thing?"

BORGES: I don't think one can help it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you help anger?

BORGES: Yes, yes. I think that many people encourage anger or think it a very fine thing.

INTERVIEWER: Masculine, they think it's manly to fight.

BORGES: Yes, and it isn't, eh?

INTERVIEWER: No. It isn't.

BORGES: I don't think there's anything praiseworthy in anger. It's a kind of weakness. Because, really, for example, I think that you should allow very few people to be able to hurt you unless of course they bludgeon you or they shoot you. For example, I can't understand anybody being angry because a waiter keeps him waiting too long, or because a porter is uncivil to him, or because somebody behind a counter doesn't take him into account because, after all, those people are like shapes in a dream? While the only people who can really hurt you, except in a physical way, except by stabbing you or shooting you, are the people you care for. A friend was saying to me, "but you haven't forgiven so and so and yet you have forgiven somebody who has behaved far worse." I said, "Yes, but so and so was, or I thought he was, a personal friend and so it's rather difficult to

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forgive him. While the other is an utter stranger so whatever he does he can't hurt me because he's not that near to me." I mean if you care for people they can hurt you very much, they can hurt you by being indifferent to you, or by slighting you.

INTERVIEWER: Oblivion; that's what you said the highest form of revenge is.

BORGES: Oblivion, yes, quite right, but, for example, if I were insulted by a stranger in the street I don't think I would give the matter a second thought. I would just pretend I hadn't heard him and go on, because after all, I don't exist for him, so why should he exist for me? Of course, in the case of the students walking into my room, walking into my classroom, they knew me, they knew that I was teaching English Literature, it was quite different. But if they had been strangers, if they had been, well, brawlers in the street, or drunkards or so on, I suppose I would have taken anything from them and forgotten all about it.

INTERVIEWER: You never got into any fights in childhood?

BORGES: Yes, I did. But that was a code. I had to do it. Well my eyesight was bad; it was very weak, and I was generally defeated. But it had to be done. Because there was a code and, in fact, when I was a boy, there was even a code of dueling. But I think dueling is a very stupid custom, no? After all, it's quite irrelevant. If you quarrel with me and I quarrel with you, what has our swordsmanship or our marksmanship to do with it? Nothing, — unless you have the mystical idea that God will punish the wrong; I don't think anybody has that kind of idea, no? Well, suppose we get back to more . . . because I don't know why I seem to be rambling on.

INTERVIEWER: But this is probably better than anything because it really enables me to know you.

BORGES: Yes, but it will not be very surprising or very interesting.

INTERVIEWER: I mean people that write about you all write the same things.

BORGES: Yes, yes, and they all make things too self-conscious and too intricate at the same time, no? Don't you think so?

INTERVIEWER: Well, of couse it's hard to write about a writer you like; it's hard to write anyway. You wrote a poem roughly about that didn't you? "The Other Tiger."

BORGES: Ah yes, that one is about the futility of art, or rather not of art but of art as conveying reality or life. Because, of course, the poem is supposed to be endless, because the moment I write about the tiger, the tiger isn't the tiger, but he becomes a set of words in the poem.

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"El otro tigre, el que no está en el verso." I wrote that poem, I was walking up and down the library, and then I wrote that poem in a day or so. I think it's quite a good poem, no? It's a parable also, and yet the parable is not too obvious, the reader doesn't have to be worried by it, or even understand it.

INTERVIEWER: You'll always be trying to capture the tiger.

BORGES: Yes, because the tiger will always be . . .

INTERVIEWER: Outside of art.

BORGES: Outside of art, yes. So it's a kind of hopeless poem, no? The same idea that you get in "A Yellow Rose." In fact, I never thought of it, but when I wrote "The Other Tiger" I was re-writing "A Yellow Rose."

INTERVIEWER: You often speak of your stories as echoing other stories you've written before. Was that the case also with "Deutsches Requiem?"

BORGES: Ah, yes. The idea there was that I had met some Nazis, or rather Argentine Nazis. And then I thought that something might be said for them. That if they really held that code of cruelty, of bravery, then they might be, well of course, lunatics, but there was something epic about them, no? Now I said, I'll try and imagine a Nazi, not Nazis as they actually are, but I'll try and imagine a man who really thinks that violence and fighting are better than making up things, and peacefulness. I'll do that. And then, I'll make him feel like a Nazi, or the Platonic idea of a Nazi. I wrote that after the Second World War because I thought that, after all, nobody had a word to say for the tragedy of Germany. I mean, such an important nation. A nation that had produced Schopenhauer and Brahms and so many poets and so many philosophers, and yet it fell a victim to a very clumsy idea. I thought, well, I will try and imagine a real Nazi, not a Nazi who is fond of self-pity, as they are, but a Nazi who feels that, after all, a violent world is a better world than a peaceful world, and who doesn't care for victory; who is mainly concerned for the *fact* of fighting. Then that Nazi wouldn't mind Germany being defeated, because, after all, if they were defeated then the others were better fighters. Well the important thing is that violence should *be*. And then I imagined that Nazi, and I wrote the story. Because there were so many people in Buenos Aires who were on the side of Hitler.

INTERVIEWER: That's horrible.

BORGES: It's awful, really. They were very mean people. But after all, Germany fought splendidly in the beginning of the war. I mean,

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if you admire Napoleon or if you admire Cromwell, or if you admire any violent manifestation, why not admire Hitler, who did what the others did?

INTERVIEWER: On a much larger scale.

BORGES: On a much larger scale and a much shorter time. Because he achieved in a few years what Napoleon failed to do in a longer period. And then I realized that those people who were on the side of Germany, they never thought of the German victories or the German glory. What they really liked was the ideas of the blitzkreig, of London being on fire, of the country being destroyed. As to the German people, they took no stock in them. Then I thought, well, now Germany has lost, now America has saved us from this nightmare, but as nobody can doubt on which side I stood, I'll see what can be done from a literary point of view in favor of the Nazis. And then I created that ideal Nazi. Of course no Nazi was ever like that, because they were full of self-pity; when they were on trial no one thought of saying "Yes, I'm guilty, I ought to be shot; why not, this is as it should be and I would shoot you if I could." Nobody said that. They were all apologizing and crying because there is something very weak and sentimental about the Germans. Something that I thoroughly disliked about them. I felt it, but when I went to Germany I was feeling it all the time. I suppose I told you a conversation I had with a German professor, no?

INTERVIEWER: No, you didn't.

BORGES: Well, I was being shown all over Berlin, one of the ugliest cities in the world, no?

INTERVIEWER: I've never been to Germany.

BORGES: Well you shouldn't, especially if you love Germany, because once you get there you'll begin to hate it. Then I was being shown over Berlin. Of course there were any amount of vacant lots, large patches of empty ground where houses had stood and they had been bombed very thoroughly by the American Airmen, and then, you have some German, no?

INTERVIEWER: No, I'm sorry.

BORGES: Well, I'll translate. He said to me, "What have you to say about these ruins?" Then I thought, Germany has started this kind of warfare, the Allies did it because they had to, because the Germans began it. So why should I be pitying this country because of what had happened to it, because *they* started the bombing, and in a very cowardly way. I mean Göring told his people that they would be destroying England and that they had nothing whatever to fear from the English Airmen. That wasn't a noble thing to say, no? In fact,

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as a politician he should have said: "We are doing our best to destroy England, maybe we'll get hurt in the process, but it's a risk we have to run," — even if he thought it wasn't that way. So when the professor said to me "What have you to say about these ruins?" — well, my German is not too good, but I had to make my answer very curt, so I said, "I've seen London." And then of course he dried up. He changed the subject because he had wanted me to pity him.

INTERVIEWER: He wanted a quote from Borges.

BORGES: Well, I gave him a quotation, no?

INTERVIEWER: But not the one he wanted.

BORGES: Not the one he wanted. Then I said (to myself) what a pity that I have English blood, because it would have been better if I had been a straight South American. But, after all, I don't think he knew it, no?

INTERVIEWER: He should have read "The Warrior And The Captive" and then he would have found out.

BORGES: Yes, he would have found out, — yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's a good story, don't you think? It's very concise.

BORGES: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You're able to work in —

BORGES: No! I worked in nothing; my grandmother told me the whole thing. [*Laughter*] Yes, because she was in the frontier and this happened way back in the 1800's.

INTERVIEWER: But you linked it with something that happened in history.

BORGES: With something told by Croce, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and that's what makes it effective.

BORGES: Yes. I thought that the two stories, the two characters, might be essentially the same. Yes... a barbarian being wooed to Rome, to civilization, and then an English girl turning to witchcraft, to barbarians, to living in the Pampas. In fact it's the same story as "The Theologians," now as I come to think of it. In "The Theologians" you have two enemies and one of them sends the other to the stake. And then they find out that somehow they're the same man. But I think "The Warrior And The Captive" is a better story, no?

INTERVIEWER: I wouldn't say so, no.

BORGES: No? Why?

INTERVIEWER: There's something almost tragic, on a tragic level about "The Theologians." It's a very moving story.

BORGES: Yes, "The Theologians" is more of a tale; the other is merely the quotation or the telling of two parables.

INTERVIEWER: I mean the theologians are pathetic and yet there's some

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thing noble about them; their earnestness, perhaps even their sense of self-importance.

BORGES: Yes, and it's more of a tale. While in the other I think that the tale is spoiled, by the fact of, well, you think of the writer as thinking himself clever — in taking two different instances and bringing them together. Don't you think so?

INTERVIEWER: I think they're both good.

BORGES: Yes, but the "Warrior and the Captive" makes for easier reading, while most people have been utterly baffled and bored by "The Theologians."

INTERVIEWER: No, I love that story.

BORGES: Well, I love it also, but I'm speaking of my friends, or some of my friends. They all thought that the whole thing was quite pointless.

INTERVIEWER: But I also love "The Garden of Forking Paths." Now, you don't like that one.

BORGES: I think it's quite good as a detective story, yes.

INTERVIEWER: I think it's more than a detective story, though.

BORGES: Well it should be. Because, after all, I had Chesterton behind me and Chesterton knew how to make the most of a detective story. Far more than, well, Ellery Queen or Erle Stanley Gardner.

INTERVIEWER: You once edited some anthologies of detective stories, didn't you?

BORGES: I was a director of a series called *The Seventh Circle,* and we published some hundred and fifty detective novels. We began by Nicholas Blake; we went on to Michael Innis, then to Wilkie Collins, then to Dickens' *Mystery of Edwin Drood,* then to different American and English writers, and it had a huge success, because the idea that a detective story could also be literary was a new idea in the Argentine. Because people thought of them, as they must have thought of Westerns, no?, as being merely amusing. I think that those books did a lot of good, because they reminded writers that plots were important. If you read detective novels, and if you take up other novels, afterwards, the first things that strike you, that's unjust of course, but it happens, is to think of the other books as being shapeless. While in a detective novel everything is very nicely worked in. In fact it's so nicely worked in that it becomes mechanical, as Stevenson pointed out.

INTERVIEWER: I'm surprised that with your love of detective stories you don't care so much for Dostoevsky. For *Crime and Punishment,* for example?

BORGES: *Crime and Punishment,* yes. I was greatly struck by it. Yes,

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I think it's a very fine work. But he wrote other books that I've tried to read through, and I've been defeated by them.

INTERVIEWER: *The Brothers Karamazov*?

BORGES: Yes, I never could read it. I never finished it, and I've tried it three or four times over in my life with the best intentions. And yet *The Possessed* is a very fine book. But there are other novels I find better, no? For example, Conrad's novels. But that's my personal bias, simply.

INTERVIEWER: You once said to me you could envision a world without novels but not without tales or verses. How do you feel about philosophy? Could you envision a world without philosophy?

BORGES: No. I think that people who have no philosophy live a poor kind of life, no? People who are too sure about Reality and about themselves. I think that philosophy helps you to live. For example, if you think of life as a dream, there may be something gruesome or uncanny about it, and you may sometimes feel that you are living in a nightmare. But if you think of Reality as something hard and fast, that's still worse, no? I think that philosophy may give the world a kind of haziness, but that haziness is all to the good. If you're a Materialist, if you believe in hard and fast things, then you're tied down by Reality, or by what you call Reality. So that in a sense philosophy dissolves Reality. But as Reality is not always too pleasant, you will be helped by that dissolution. Well, those are very obvious thoughts, of course, though they are none the less true for being obvious.

INTERVIEWER: In your work you allude to Philosophies and systems of thought from all over the world from ancient times to our era. But two movements are conspicuously absent — one of these figures or movements is Freud.

BORGES: No, I always disliked him. But I've always been a great reader of Jung. But I read Jung in the same way as, let's say, I might read Pliny or Frazier's *Golden Bough*; I read it as a kind of mythology, or as a kind of museum or encyclopedia of curious lores.

INTERVIEWER: When you say that you dislike Freud, what do you mean?

BORGES: I think of him as a kind of madman, no? A man laboring over a sexual obsession. Well perhaps he didn't take it to heart. Perhaps he was just doing it as a kind of game, no? I tried to read him, and I thought of him either as a charlatan or as a madman in a sense. After all, the world is far too complex to be boiled down to that all too simple scheme, no? But in Jung, well of course Jung

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I have read far more widely than Freud, but in Jung you feel a wide and hospitable mind. But in the case of Freud it all boils down to a few rather unpleasant facts. But of course, that's merely my ignorance or my bias.

INTERVIEWER: I take it you don't think much of the Existentialists either?

BORGES: No. I think that existentialism makes for a kind of vanity. I met Sartre; I think he wrote about me in some magazine, and he praised me up. Naturally it's a great thing for an Argentine to be praised by a Frenchman, no? But I always disliked him.

INTERVIEWER: Personally, you mean?

BORGES: No, no no no. I dislike people who are out for propaganda. I don't think he should have allowed a café to be called Café Existentialism. I don't think of Bishop Berkeley doing that kind of thing, or of Schopenhauer. And I could hardly think of him as a gentleman, though of course that's another old-fashioned word, no?

INTERVIEWER: Unfortunately.

BORGES: Unfortunately, yes. I think that the species is dying out, or has died out, no? It's a great pity.

INTERVIEWER: In the poem "Matthew 25:30" you say, "And still you have not written the poem." Do you really feel that way?

BORGES: But that was an actual experience. I felt that, after all, an overwhelming number of things has happened to me, and amongst these things bitterness and misfortune and disappointment and sadness and loneliness, and that those things are the stuff that poetry is made of, and that if I were a real Poet I should think of my unhappiness, of my many forms of unhappiness as being really gifts. Of course among those things in the poem there were good things also, no? For example, Walt Whitman, but most of them, at least as far as I can remember the poem, most of them are really misfortunes. Yet in a way they were all gifts, and the experience was real. Of course when I wrote it I may have invented the examples I used, but the feeling I had of many things having happened to me and yet of my not having used them for an essential purpose, which to me was poetry, that to me was a very real experience. In fact it made me forget that that afternoon I had been jilted.

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

"EXPECTANT MOTHERS TRAINED"

"Taylor said the time has come for police 'to study and apply so far as possible all the factors that will in any way promote better understanding and a better relationship between citizens and the law enforcement officer, even if it means attempting to enter into the learning and cultural realms of unborn children.' "

(*St. Louis Post-Dispatch,* August 11, 1968.) Contributed by Miss Elizabeth Hadas, St. Louis, Missouri.

"When asked, 'Are you for, or against, the intervention of the United States in Vietnam,' Marshall McLuhan replied, 'The answer to the first question depends upon how we recognize the role of the war in Westernizing the Orient. As a crash program of Westernization and education, the war consists in initiating the East in the mechanical technology of the industrial age. All would change if we were to use the technology of this century. In short, the answer to the first question in terms of war as an educational program suggests an area of discussion that has not been tapped. Perhaps any technological gap tends to be a major cause of war, even as it tends to be liquidated by education.

" 'Do we not tend to regard war as conducted by means of the older technology as relatively endurable? What light does this throw on our own uses of the latest technology in relation to education?' "

(*Authors Take Sides on Vietnam,* Ed. by Cecil Woolf & John Bagguley: New York, Simon and Schuster, 1967.) Contributed by Rogers Albritton, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"LAIRD CHOOSES 3 TO HEAD SERVICES"

"[Mr. Packard] would forgo the more than $700,000 a year dividends from the stock, together with $150,000 or so in salary and bonuses from the company.

"More than one-third of Hewlett-Packard's business is defense–related.

"When reporters raised questions today about the propriety of the

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Packard selection and Mr. Packard's stock trust proposal . . . Mr. Laird stoutly defended his appointee.

" 'He is making a greater sacrifice than any man in the history of the country' to enter government service, Mr. Laird said."
(*New York Times,* January 7, 1969.)

"Hershey contested the suggestion that it should be left up to an individual's conscience whether he would join the military if he objected to a war.

" 'If everybody's conscience is allowed to roam at will, you could justify anything,' Hershey said."
(*Los Angeles Times,* November 17, 1968.) Contributed by S. Cooney, Los Angeles, California.

"On Monday, the relic will be exhibited at 10 o'clock a.m. at the Church of St. Anthony of Estoril. The Army Regiment No. 19 of Cascais which has St. Anthony as its patron will come out of the citadel wearing uniforms of that epoque and carrying a picture of the Saint, who is an honorary lieutenant colonel in the Portuguese Army."
(*Diario de Lisboa,* July 13, 1968.) Contributed by Dr. Antonio Silva Carvalho, Lisbon, Portugal.

"The Rev. Kenneth H. Okkerse, pastor of the Church of the Redeemer in Bethesda, has withdrawn as a co-plaintiff in a suit designed to block the busing of District of Columbia school children into Montgomery County.

" 'I have had deep and searching second thoughts about my action and I now am convinced that being a part of this suit is not the best method to accomplish understanding between the races,' he said."
(*The Washington Post,* September 17, 1968.) Contributed by Carolyn Kizer, Washington, D.C.

"DANGEROUS AS CONG"

"FT. POLK, LA. (*UPI*)—. . . . A wooded area near [this] base has been both a haven for deer hunting and combat training.

" 'This area closed to hunting this season for protection of US troops training for Vietnam warfare,' said 300 signs posted in the area."
(*Newark News,* November 18, 1968.)

Editor's Note: *We'd like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to* PR *will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be sent to the late comers.*

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *This is a partial list of people who did not attend, and so far as we were able to find out most were not invited to, the Conference of the International Association for Cultural Freedom at Princeton, held in early December, 1968.*

Lionel Able
Henry David Aiken
Hannah Arendt
W. H. Auden
James Baldwin
Geoffry Barraclough
John Barth
Roland Barthes
Simone de Beauvoir
Isaiah Berlin
David Caute
Peter Caws
Noam Chomsky
Eleanor Clark
Eldridge Cleaver
Robert Coles
Frederick Crews
David Dellinger
Theodore Draper
Martin Duberman
Hans Magnus Enzensberger
Leslie Fiedler
Daniel Friedenberg
Eugene Genovese
Richard Gilman
Alan Ginsberg
Lucien Goldmann
Mitchell Goodman
Richard Goodwin
Jurgin Habermas
Stuart Hampshire
Michael Harrington
Nat Hentoff
Richard Hofstadter
Richard Hoggart
Paul Jacobs
LeRoi Jones
Alfred Kazin
Frank Kermode
Andrew Kopkind
Christopher Lasch
Doris Lessing
Denise Levertov
George Lichtheim
Robert Lowell
Jack Ludwig
Dwight MacDonald
Alasdair MacIntyre
Mary McCarthy
Norman Mailer
Steven Marcus
Karl Miller
Iris Murdoch
Jack Newfield
Conor Cruise O'Brien
William Phillips
Richard Poirier
Philip Rahv
Harold Rosenberg
Jean-Paul Sartre
Susan Sontag
Stephen Spender
I. F. Stone
Harvey Swados
William Taylor
Michael Thelwell
Lionel Trilling
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BOOKS

MARXISM OF THE WILL

VENCEREMOS! THE SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF CHE GUEVARA. Edited with an introduction by John Gerassi. Macmillan. $7.95.

REMINISCENCES OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR. By Che Guevara. MR Press. $6.95.

THE COMPLETE BOLIVIAN DIARIES OF CHE GUEVARA. Edited and with an introduction by Daniel James. Stein and Day. $6.95.

MY FRIEND CHE. By Ricardo Rojo. Dial Press. $4.95.

REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION. By Regis Debray. Grove Press. 95¢.

THE COMMUNISTS AND PEACE. By Jean-Paul Sartre. Braziller. $6.95.

Of these books the two most important are Gerassi's collection of Che Guevara's writings and Rojo's brilliant biography. Guevara's own reminiscences of the Cuban revolutionary war are interesting, but the reader needs to be well-informed already to make much use of them. Debray's theorizing is perhaps only interesting for the contrast between the Debray version of Che and Che as he was, and the Sartre is worth noticing in this context because it helps us to judge how much of Debray is Paris academicism. Finally I notice the American version of Che's diaries merely to note that it differs in important ways from the Cuban version. The publishers on their dust jacket say their edition "was authenticated not by Cubans or Bolivians but by Americans"; here's news for you, Stein and Day — I still do not trust it. James accuses Che of "personal pique"; his publishers join with him in entertaining the suggestion that Castro was jealous of Che, deliberately denied the help he could have given and so betrayed him. This obscene suggestion does not come well from Americans, who ought at least to realise that the death of Guevara may well cost them as much as his life did.

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The death of Che had — and it is difficult to use the word after it has been so cheaply misused — tragic quality. To use a dramatic metaphor is not to suggest anything histrionic about Che's actions or passions; it is to indicate that those actions and passions are an appropriate subject for poetry as well as for history, because, as Aristotle said, poetry is "more universal" than history. Che was not just an individual, but a representative figure, who lived out a tragic action. A tragic action is one in which a hero encounters a catastrophe as a result of a flaw in his character. By a character I do not mean a mere assemblage of psychological traits, I mean rather the incarnation of a role. (What poetry was for Aristotle, sociology is for us.) What was Che's flaw?

To ask this question, I have suggested, is to ask about a role and not about an assemblage of personal traits. That personal traits can explain little in political or social action is made clear once again in reading reminiscences of Che by those who knew him well. He was an asthmatic who developed a will strong enough to take him on to the athletic field and through medical school. He was an ascetic who did not undervalue sex or alcohol. He was an altruist, but without any signs of that self-contempt which so often underpins altruism. I shall suggest later that these traits were not entirely unimportant in relation to some key positions that Che took up; but there are no splendid psychological generalizations to be constructed which will demonstrate that asthmatic, ascetic, altruism is the seedbed of revolution. As so often, what is impressive is not the connection, but the relative lack of connection between individual personality and social role. The need to reminisce about Che has in any case obviously little to do with any task of explanation; it is much more as though his friends still have to reassure themselves that it all really did happen, that this living out of one of our political dreams was not in fact only a dream.

The search for such reassurance is perhaps connected with the extent to which the Cuban Revolution was an accidental happening. By this I mean much more than that it did not follow out the patterns of previous revolutions. Regis Debray is able to emphasize that and yet to insist that the Cuban Revolution embodied an experience from which more generally applicable laws and maxims can be extracted. In this he follows Che faithfully and yet there is an important difference in tone between what Huberman and Sweezy call Debray's "comprehensive and authoritative presentation of the revolutionary thought of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara" and what we actually encounter in Che's writings. This difference arises from the stale,

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academic atmosphere of Debray's arguments. For however authentically Debray may reproduce what is new and Cuban he does so in a setting and a style which is old and French. So that while in Guevara's own narratives the Marxism-Leninism somehow coexists with a sense of the Cuban revolution as a chain of improvisations and coincidences, in Debray's writing revolutionary action becomes nothing but matter for theoretical formulas counterposed to other theoretical formulas. Accident has disappeared and with it truth.

We find in Debray a constant reiteration of Sartrian themes. There are the same strange attempts to unite historical necessity and absolute freedom, to dissent from Stalinism and yet to count Stalin among the revolutionary ancestors and to portray Trotskyism and the villain of the piece; indeed Debray explicitly refers back to Sartre's fifteen-year-old anti-Trotskyist polemic in *The Communists and Peace*. One can well understand why Trotsky's ghost haunts Sartre and Debray. For both Sartre and Debray have a peculiar conception — far more elitist than that of Leninism — of an inert mass of be it workers, be it peasants, who need a leadership of particular gifts to rouse them to revolutionary activity. Sartre in 1952 and 1954 was equally contemptuous of those sociologists who declared that the French working classes were not revolutionary and those Trotskyists who declared that they were revolutionary — but that their revolutionary tendencies were suppressed or inhibited by their reaction to the Stalinist leadership of the PCF. On Sartre's view the working masses are not, but will become a revolutionary class precisely because the Communist Party presents them with goals which transcend their immediate needs; so for Debray the guerrilla army is to present the peasants with goals which transcend their immediate needs. It is a doctrine which enables Sartre and Debray to set on one side in the most arbitrary way the question of what workers or peasants do in fact want now. It also enables Sartre to disregard the theoretical positions of Stalinist bureaucrats; his understanding of the falsity of Stalinism seems in his writings of the early fifties only marginal to his evaluation of Stalinism's political function. So Debray too exalts questions of organization over questions of political goals and programs and sneers at the Trotskyists for their emphasis upon fundamental theory.

In his intellectual style then Debray is unlike Che; but Che himself could not avoid facing dilemmas which in other contexts were responsible for creating Trotskyism, and he could not avoid making choices which were incompatible with Trotskyism. This is because Trotsky himself had had to face at successive points in his career all the dilemmas of those who wish to make a Marxist revolution in an underdeveloped

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country and because too the failure of Trotskyism to provide a recipe for successful revolutionary practice in the face of those dilemmas is an inescapable fact. *What is the part of the peasantry in the making of a socialist revolution?* Marx could see no part for them, Mao invented one *ex nihilo* and called it Marxist, and every position intermediate between Marx's and Mao's has been taken up by some Marxist theorist at some time. Trotskyism at the very least represents the thesis of the ineliminable necessity of the participation of an industrial working class in revolution-making. *Can there be socialism in one country?* One paradox of post-Stalin Stalinism is that it may be those who are most repelled by the surviving Stalinist features of the Soviet Union who therefore try to build a socialist revolution in isolation from the Soviet camp or at least in the minimum of contact with it. But in so doing they revive the very thesis of "socialism in one country" on which Stalinism was founded and in this way reject Trotskyism. *What is the place of the revolutionary party?* The orthodox Communist Parties in Latin America are obviously not revolutionary parties; their weakness and their reformism are notorious. But in the struggle waged by peasant guerrillas there is little room for a party at all. Hence Trotskyism once more appears as the ghost of orthodox Bolshevism, repudiating militantly the only militant strategies apparently open in Latin America.

Guevara's position is thus easily defined by contrast with that of Trotskyism, and in this at least Debray is perceptive. But if Guevara offered us a revolution made by peasants, a revolution which creates socialism in one country, and a revolution with a revolutionary army rather than a revolutionary party, he aspired to do so as a Marxist–Leninist, and here is the crux. For if Bolshevism can only appear in the modern world in ghostly form, Trotskyism is indeed its authentic ghost. How then can an anti-Trotskyist position be grafted on to Marxism–Leninism? To answer this question will return us to my initial inquiry as to the tragic flaw in the role acted out by Che. For what Che uses to close the gap between what the Marxist-Leninist must hold on an objective analysis to be a situation in which the socialist revolution cannot yet be made and the revolutionary aspirations of the selfsame Marxist-Leninist who confronts himself with this, as it must seem, defeatist analysis, is an appeal to pure will. Lenin too was confronted with this gap and at every stage wrestled to link the present and the future by means of a consciousness nurtured by the organizational forms of the party. In Guevara, although questions of organization are treated with intellectual respect, it is the voluntarist component of Leninism which is appealed to as never before.

Consider for example the question of planning. Guevara conducted

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a polemic against the French Communist expert on *planification,* Charles Bettelheim, in which he argued that because of the level that consciousness (in the Marxist sense) had reached in the world at large, the social and political consciousness of Marxists in a country where the objective conditions for a socialist revolution had not yet been reached could nonetheless enable them to transcend those limitations and to do what seemed objectively impossible. From this premise Che argued further in more general terms for a relative independence of cultural superstructure from economic basis. This led him to quarrel with Bettelheim and other Marxists on economic policy. Material incentives, such as may be provided by a wages structure may be appropriate as the mainspring of a market economy, but are inappropriate to socialism. Centralized planning demands the centralization of major economic decision-making, but it does not require centralized management.

What are to take the place of material incentives and of the dictates of centralized management? A new motivation springing from the new nature of socialist man. Moral incentives must be the mainspring; material incentives must be subordinate. The word "moral" recurs throughout Che's writings. He was the minister who awarded the title "Hero of Labor" to workers who excelled. In his speeches to workers he constantly urged sacrifice and hard work. His personal asceticism put his right to make such calls beyond question. But their theoretical justification is quite another matter.

Behind the Leninist voluntarism we see in Che the revival of an older answer to the Marxist dilemma about morality. Marx himself never raises explicitly the question of the motives of those who seek to achieve socialism. At the turn of the century when Bernstein raised the question of the moral foundations of socialism and turned back to Kant's invocation of duty in order to answer it, Kautsky replied to him with a crude invocation of utilitarianism which relied on an underlying appeal to material self-interest; and Rosa Luxemburg in her polemics against Bernstein avoided coming to grips with this question at all. Bernstein's Kantian answer was in fact more influential than we sometimes realize; and to be Kantian was not necessarily to be a right-wing social democrat. After 1914 Kautsky the orthodox Marxist was far to the right of Karl Liebknecht, the Kantian and Spartacist. Guevara was Karl Liebknecht's spiritual heir; like Liebknecht he in the end bore witness to the fact that moral heroism is not enough. In the improbable environment of Cuba, Kantian moral theory was reborn as revolutionary.

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Che's moral heroism, his attempt to transcend the material environment, was the tragic flaw which finally destroyed him in Bolivia. When he left Cuba he wrote to his children: "Above all, always be able to feel deeply any injustice committed against anyone in any part of the world. It's a revolutionary's most beautiful quality"; and to his parents: "Essentially, nothing has changed, except that I am much more conscientious, my Marxism has struck deep roots and is purified." Again the Kantian note is struck. Conscientiousness took him to his death, because it led him to ignore political and military facts, and especially Barrientos' ability to mobilize peasant support.

When I stress Che's moralism, I do not want to underestimate his intellectual qualities. Americans in particular should read the speech rejecting the Alliance for Progress made at the Punta del Este Conference of the OAS in 1961; about that particular Kennedy cloud-cuckoo project Guevara has proved alarmingly right. But when Guevara is not being critical of imperialism, he is all too apt to substitute invocations of honor or of the spirit of sacrifice for intellectual analysis. Guevara's student admirers are indeed moved precisely by this and so is John Gerassi who has done scholarship a service by his collection of Guevara's speeches and writings. Yet what they admire is just that abstract moralism which Marx himself ought to have taught us to suspect. Che's last letter to his parents begins with an allusion to Cervantes: "Once more I feel Rocinante's ribs under my heels; I'm taking to the road again with my shield on my arm." Perhaps as he wrote this he should have remembered that other reminiscence of Cervantes in a footnote in *Capital* which ends by Marx remarking that "Don Quixote long ago paid the penalty for wrongly imagining that knight errantry was compatible with all economic forms of society."

Alasdair MacIntyre

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TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT

COUPLES. By John Updike. Alfred A. Knopf. $6.95.

In its delicacy and fullness Updike's style seems to register a flow of fragments almost perfectly toned. And yet, after pages and pages of his minutely detailed impressions, the accumulated effect is one of waste. There's something self-consciously graceful and poetic about the long rhythms of the phrases. It's all so immensely *written*.

What it all purports to be for in *Couples* is the exposure of a sensibility and life style, that of the midthirtyish Eastern-seaboard upper–middle class. The couples of the title live in Tarbox, an old New England town turning exurb, where their principal pastime is adultery. The mixed doubles that constitute the plot are played on a religio-symbolic court, and the hero, Piet Hanema, is seen in his dalliance with various Paramours as a sort of Everyman trying to cheat Death. At last overtaken, Piet arranges an abortion for Foxy, his pregnant mistress, whereupon God strikes the Congregational church with lightning and Piet is forced to divorce his wife, marry Foxy, and leave Tarbox for another town and another group of couples. The moral of the story is that America is on the skids because the middle class goes to bed instead of to church.

One thing Updike can never be accused of is what Henry James called "weak specification." Tarbox and its inhabitants are built up with a compulsive sociological detail that makes the novel seem almost a parody of the realistic convention: houses, children, clothes, cars, places, brand names, family histories. When Piet and Foxy meet in a parking lot every store around the lot is named, from the A&P to Beth's Books and Cards. Yet in spite of the enormous amount of evidence about these people, it's hard to tell them apart. As though he knew this, the author has given each one a little Dickensian tic or tag that can serve as an *aide-mémoire*: Harold speaks fractured French, Frank quotes Shakespeare, Janet has a big bosom, etc. Nevertheless, most of the characters get swamped in the welter of realistic detail about them.

Or perhaps they go down under the pressure of the style, a prose so full of tricks that it seems to be constantly making a claim for the author's personal cleverness. It is larded with adjectives, stuffed with metaphors, as if everything had to be compared to something else and

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nothing might be said simply. This rule applies even when all that's involved is an empty stomach — "Hunger questioned his vaporous head" — or a full bladder — "His kidneys signaled: the sweetness pealing of a silent bell: relieve me" — or a drained glass — "The olive egg in his martini had been abandoned by its mother high and dry." There is also a handsome display of devices usually reserved for poetry: "Wounded by winning, he bowed his head and with suppliant lips took a nipple, faintly salt and sour, in." Reading to the rhythm of these aggressive sound effects becomes as irritating as finding oneself marching down the street to the rat-a-tat-tat of the drum in some distant parade. Nabokov does this kind of thing, but there is irony in the way Nabokov's language dandles and preens itself, a cold hearted economy that keeps it from becoming florid or bathetic. In Updike's writing the richness of the language seems an uncontrolled surface proliferation, like the growth of a creeper, indiscriminate and obscuring.

The same excessive cleverness afflicts the treatment of feeling and action. The characters, even the ones who didn't go to college, think and speak about themselves with the detachment and sophistication of an analyst with a patient. Their deepest motives are articulated so con-

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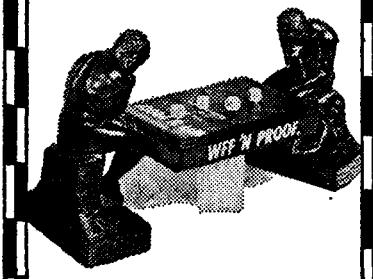

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stantly that insight comes to seem facile and monotonous. The ultimate motive and meaning of a novel, that dim thing on which all its structure rests, is here made external and explicit, plastered all over it like wallpaper. The author is just too knowing; there is nothing about his subject that is more powerful than his understanding of it.

Despite the fancy fucking, Updike's work continues to give the impression of a shortage of experience, at least of the kind that structures and dramatizes. It's hard to take seriously the wife-swapping of a bunch of banal and indistinguishable characters. The point, of course, is that they *are* banal. But behind this explicit statement the novel is really indicating something quite different, something that accounts for its great popularity with the very people it's about: around the petty humiliations and feeble rebellions of these characters hangs an aura of nostalgia and wasted beauty that claims indulgence for them, a sort of pathos of middle-class life. In this version of pastoral the hero has fallen from potent innocence into the stale mediocrity of marriage; women are the villains, however unwitting, and sex the snare. The copulation scenes begin lusciously enough — "If her touch could be believed, his balls were all velvet, his phallus sheer silver" — but it all turns to post-coital sadness and sharp-eyed observation of the less attractive features of the ladies involved: baggy breasts, thick haunches and varicose veins.

This narcissistic obsession with declining beauty and potency is at the heart of *Couples*. Essentially a sentimental vision of life, it gilds everything with a sadness arising not from the experience itself, but from some wan expectation on the author's part, some adolescent squeamishness that endows people in their twenties with a pathetic air of approaching mortality and makes all of life after high-school graduation a long self-pitying downward glide towards death.

The bedizened prose, in its elaboration of their tiniest feelings, hovers tenderly over these affluent suburbanites as if they were all twelve-year-olds dying of leukemia. It is this much praised style, even more than the preacherish moral vision or the anachronistic technique, that makes *Couples* seem such an irrelevant exercise. Apparently effortless and inexhaustible, in its fatal facility it trivializes everything it touches, finally making one feel that what can be written with such ease is not worth writing at all.

Elizabeth Dalton

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ENDGAME

THE THEORY OF THE AVANT-GARDE. By Renato Poggioli. Harvard University Press. $6.50.

The critical literature on the problem of "literary modernism" keeps growing rapidly, as if to acknowledge a shared impression that we are witnessing the end of a cultural epoch. No one supposes such an end can be dated precisely; it may stretch out over several decades; and as if to demonstrate an attractive perversity, it may even go through a series of convulsions that would bring about a new kind or phase of modernism. Yet anyone attentive to the troubles of the serious writers working in the sixties, to say nothing of the revolt against culture which has swept through our culture, must recognize the appropriateness of registering a stop, be it period or semicolon.

In Renato Poggioli's book, anxious musings of this kind barely appear. First published in 1962, shortly before his premature death, the book, I would guess, was written during the fifties. A serious and provocative work, it breathes that confidence in survival which the defenders of literary modernism shared as recently as ten or fifteen years ago. We may suspect that even this confidence was by then no longer warranted — though to say this is to indulge in the wisdom of hindsight. Poggioli writes, perhaps as a strategy of exposition and perhaps out of his charming enthusiasm, as if modernism were assured of an indefinite future, indeed a future as extensive as that of the social–historical crisis from which it largely stems. But he may be in error here. It is almost impossible to see literary modernism as merely an immanent development within Western culture; even the least socially-oriented critics find themselves having to relate modernism to a crisis of historical consciousness. Yet just as effect may survive cause, so cause may survive effect. The persistence of the historical crisis of Western society into the decades to come does not necessarily signify the flourishing or rebirth of the culture of modernism.

The Theory of the Avant-Garde is a perplexing book. Every page bears evidence of a keen mind, a fine sensibility, a wide scholarship; but the writing is so clogged and pulpy that one grows first impatient and then enraged. I do not know Italian and therefore cannot judge whether the trouble stems from the original or from the translation of Mr. Gerald Fitzgerald; but in either case, the book as we now have it in English is something of a brilliant mess, likely to be indispensible to

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those with a special interest in the subject and forbidding to everyone else.

If one digs, there are nuggets: a useful distinction between the intelligentsia and the intellectual elite (the first a social-cultural formation likely to be antagonistic toward modernism as a diversion from political tasks, and the second a literary-intellectual group forming the characteristic audience and fierce spokesman for modernism); the deep affinity displayed by modernism for sentiments of anarchism "which is, if only in non-ideological forms, the single political ideal that the avant-garde artist sincerely feels, despite any totalitarian sympathies, left or right"; the close if uneasy kinship between modernism and "the cult of violence"; the mixture of dependence and hostility in the relationship between the avant-garde and the fashions of popular culture; the thrust of modernism to race through the century, as if the present had no intrinsic value but were merely a tract of obsolescence to be left behind; the drive of modernism toward self-consumption, an end to speech and art, the silence of anti-art — which is why its greatest practitioners kept shy of the limits they kept approaching.

Poggioli chooses, rightly I think, to locate the distinctiveness of modernism in a complex of values and responses to life, rather than through formal traits and properties, although he is of course sufficiently sophisticated to underscore the fact that the distinction is primarily an analytic convenience. Like Zamyatin in his great essay on modern literature, Poggioli sees experimentalism as a secondary feature in the development of modernism (the matter would no doubt be different if he were discussing art and music). Among the controlling values Poggioli cites are these:

> *activism* — the characteristic modernist group is a movement not a school;
>
> *antagonism* — what the Russian futurists called "a whack at public taste" and Poggioli shrewdly notes as leading to "an exaltation of youth," with the consequent dangers of regressing to cultural infantilism;
>
> *agonism* — "an anguish alien to any metaphysical or mystical redemption . . . a sacrifice to the Moloch of historicism," sometimes reduced to an alienation "almost gratuitous . . . a morbid taste for present suffering";
>
> *futurism* — the wish, says the Italian critic Massimo Bontempelli, to create "the primitive or, better, primordial condition out of which is then born the creator found at the beginning of a new series."

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These categories are serviceable enough, and what I would regard as a central motif in modernist writing — its confrontation with an inner impulse toward nihilist surrender — Poggioli subsumes under his last two categories, though not with a sufficiently strong recognition of how desperately the modern masters, those who truly were masters, struggled against that impulse. Reading Poggioli's exposition on these matters, I have been struck by how ragged they have become: we must now learn to see the idea of the problematic as itself problematic, that is, paradoxically, as having become a mode of complacence. And the more a critic elaborates a synthetic description of modernism as if it were indeed a coherent and self-contained cultural style, the more he must move away from the great texts which can alone give it enduring value. What happens is that in time the abstracted categories are taken to have some independent or suprahistorical value: so that a new fetichism is thrown up and a great literature left behind.

There is more to be noticed in Poggioli's book, but let me confine myself to two problems, the origin of and prognosis for modernism.

As is proper for a critic with a strong historical sense, Poggioli stresses the continuities between romanticism and modernism, so much so that those literary historians who deny a severe rupture between the two will find solace in his pages. Poggioli, like others before him, has no difficulty in showing that most of the central traits or properties of modernism have their sources in the literature of romanticism. (Or at the least, that there are many similarities with romanticism.) How then could one provide a usable support for the claim that there did occur at some point in the second half of the nineteenth century a break sufficiently sharp to warrant speaking of modernism as a major new cultural style or outlook? Poggioli does not confront this question directly enough, and it is not at all easy to answer. My own disposition would be to say that enumerating formal divergences and innovations is not enough; one would have to invoke, as well, the risky notion of a fundamental shift in values and philosophic temper. The modernist writers abandon, once and for all, the wish or effort to see the universe as constituting an order which can be apprehended through transcendent revelations or intuitive flashes; they accept, to an extent the romantics did not, the "deadness" and distance, the beyondness of the world; they have lost, or care little about, what Frye calls "the sense of identity with larger power of creative energy [which] meets us everywhere in Romantic culture." And even as they share with the romantics a worship of the imagination as the central agency of creation, they do not seek a sanction for it in the external world. As a pure type — fortunately no such

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monster exists — the modernist writer is post-Christian in the sense that he has largely (no one could have entirely) shaken off the traumas which had followed on earlier, nineteenth century improvisations of skepticism.

Poggioli also seems to me unsatisfactory in his assumption that modernism will and indeed must remain the dominant culture of the West for the indefinite future. He recognizes that "the avant-garde is condemned to conquer, through the influence of fashion, that very popularity it once disdained — and this is the beginning of its end." Precisely. But then he posits a series of modernist recurrences in which "a new fashion, movement or avant-garde appears." Here I think he succumbs to a certain confusion: a new fashion, yes, as a parody-fulfillment of the modernist impulse, but a new fashion isn't at all the same as a new movement and still less the same as a new avant-garde.

Theorists of modernism often trap themselves in a dubious either/or: either there will occur a phoenixlike renewal of modernist sensibility as the necessary response to unabated historical crisis or there will be a total disintegration leading to a new cultural epoch. But the evidence, I

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think, points to a third possibility — just as, to indulge in a very loose analogy, the course of Communist society led not toward socialist renewal or bourgeois restoration but a unique bureaucratic deformation. In the realm of culture, the third possibility is that of a slow and triumphantly "successful" degeneration, a modernism popular, fashionable and inauthentic. Rather than remaining the intransigent enemy of mass culture — as Poggioli, with his eye on recent decades, calls it — modernism will now become its swinging partner.

Now it is possible to object that this would no longer be modernism as we have known it, and in an obvious sense the objection is valid — except that we must then grapple with one of the most vexing problems of our time, the relationship between original and carbon, master and epigone, authentic and fake.

Poggioli quotes Ortega y Gasset: "All the art of youth is unpopular and not casually or by accident, but by virtue of an essential destiny." A brilliant observation, when directed toward the great years of modernism; but no longer true for the present moment. On the contrary. The "essential destiny" of "all the art of youth" is now a suffocating popularity, a rapid success on the market. Even if we had no other signs, this would be enough to lead us into speculations about the end of modernism.

Irving Howe

THE BOURGEOIS POET

TO ABOLISH CHILDREN AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Karl Shapiro. Quadrangle Books. $6.50.
WHITE-HAIRED LOVER. By Karl Shapiro. Random House. $4.00.

Two new books by Karl Shapiro: a collection of eight essays on the ills of contemporary poetry and society (plus an amateur short story, billed as — God defend us — "A Fragment of a Novel in Progress"), and a group of twenty-nine poems celebrating his recent remarriage at the age of fifty-five. I'm sure we all wish him joy of his marriage. The books are less pleasant to contemplate, and the reasons they bring so little pleasure are worth scrutinizing.

Shapiro has been enacting the role of the not terribly bright village reformer ever since 1945, when, in *Essay on Rime,* he called for "a

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plainer art." What he wants is a turning from received and thus discredited English and European techniques of focus in favor of honest encounters with the stuff of local experience, which I'm afraid he takes to be uncomplicated. His masters in this enterprise have been Whitman and W. C. Williams, but he has served neither very well, lacking the sensitivity to idiom of the one and the talent for a rude and consistent honesty of the other.

The title piece of *To Abolish Children* is a reactionary put-down of the youth revolution that might perplex but certainly would not offend George Wallace. The quality of both the thinking — warmed-over early Fiedler — and the expression can be gauged from this: "The American adult must battle 'youth' to the death. 'Youth' is a figment of the American imagination which is destroying America itself." *To the death* is pure Shapiro; so is *a figment of the imagination.* Indeed, the main reason Shapiro's Philistine and square-primitivist guise fits him so snugly, the reason he has worn it so comfortably and so long, is that he possesses by nature none of the taste and tact of the literary dandies he has set himself to despise. In *To Abolish Children,* although he is presuming to discourse about poetry and its relation to public reality, he addresses us sometimes in the idiom of a Pentagon press conference, sometimes that of a small-town PTA meeting, and sometimes that of General Jack Ripper cautioning us against the indiscriminate expenditure of our bodily fluids. We find babu grammatical effects of the sort committed by the nervous genteel: "All the poets sat on the edge of their seats while Jarrell, whom everybody had to admit had earned the right to do so, put together the jigsaw puzzle of modern poetry before our eyes." Throughout are offered a prose texture which innocently achieves a realization of *lumpen-Amerika* itself.

Shapiro manages to install even Randall Jarrell within this world of cliché: we are told quite seriously that he "faced the music of the American Way of Life." Likewise Baudelaire becomes "the alpha and omega of modern poetry," Eliot "hits the nail on the head," and Frost manifests a "disinterest in ideologies." Sometimes a more hep idiom takes over, as when Whitman is described, in the language of the martini suburbs, as "bright-eyed and bushy-tailed." Then the voice will shift to that of the rewrite man on the local weekly, and we hear of "members of the third sex," "the garrison state," and "the world today," or we are informed that "Ours is one of the greatest periods of art in history." We are forced to apply to Shapiro what he says of Hart Crane: "He would have liked to be illiterate but he was only uneducated. He was . . . cursed with a touch of the poison of culture, wanting to be cured and wanting another bite."

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The sad thing is that Shapiro's simplistic program for writing commits him — "lock, stock, and barrel," as he would say, and does — to this kind of language and to its shabby simulacrum of actual thought and feeling. Even if his talents were such that he could aspire to accurate exposition, it is logically a part of his program not to write well because the enemy is, as he tells us, "literature." Those who write well are exactly those "stylists," snobs and phonies who populate "the Serious World," and Shapiro's miserable prose assumes the function of distinguishing himself from them.

In their substance, Shapiro's essays against "literature" and "the Literati" — he actually uses that word — are the counterpart of those embarrassing ads for "Conjecturism" in *The New York Times Book Review,* ads suggesting that the common reader is being had by sissy New York critics who design nothing but his humiliation and bondage. Shapiro's implicit appeals to untutored American manliness are similar, as are his suggestions that "art" and "criticism" are largely rackets practiced upon the sturdy autodidacts of the Middle West by the swarming quacks and fairies of the East.

Seeing nothing defective in either the rhetoric he practices or the simpleminded critical dialectic he has embraced, Shapiro cannot be expected to write interesting poems, and those in *White-Haired Lover* — an implausible but I suppose comforting oxymoron — will disappoint critics and lovers alike. Even the audience of *This Is My Beloved,* solicited by a jacket blurb promising poems that are "frankly erotic," will demand its money back. In *To Abolish Children* we are told that poetry is an explosion; what we are given here is gentility, padding and cliché. I don't require that in love poems a man descant, as Leonard Cohen and Paul Goodman do, of hard-ons and blow jobs and tits, and I certainly don't require it when a man is telling us — although unasked, to be sure — why his marriage is satisfactory. But it does seem to me that Shapiro's way of dealing with the actualities of love keeps us at some distance from either experience or poetry:

If I could write one honest sentence now
I'd say I love you but I don't know how.

Despite all his pleas for the "non-moral society," Shapiro has not been able to rid himself of a lurking concern with making a good — here, a respectable — impression, and despite his strenuous antipathy to traditional poetic forms, here he clutches the sonet as his *cache-sexe,* a device which will provide him with the fig leaves and pasties for which, as an essentially decent person, he feels a need. These poems pretend to send up the sonnet ("stab it" is Shapiro's awkward way of

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putting it), but actually they naïvely capitulate to its norms. Sonnet VIII ("How Do I Love You?") is an example. The force of the rigid rhyming system of the sestet invites Shapiro, devoid as he is of language resources, to juxtapose warring idioms, and we end with a mixture, destructive rather than explosive, of Mrs. Browning, Pope, Edna Millay, the Beatles and Auden:

> *How do I love you? Is it just a game*
> *To love your sadness and possess your name?*
> *And now you have no reason to be sad*
> *Do I lose the little of you that I had?*
> *And if I've lost you who is there to blame?*
> *(Faulty communications are my middle name).*

Indeed. The reason the third and fourth lines have to be read at least twice is Shapiro's omission of *that* in his anxiety — which has no reasonable cause in one genuinely unworried about "literature" — not to exceed the decasyllabic limit in contiguous lines.

But one exposes the sleaziness of Shapiro's achievement at the same time that one doesn't really dislike the familiar character he has undertaken to play. It is the character of the bumbling, well-intentioned Good American, too good to be wasted in the aluminum-siding business, but not of course good enough to compete with sensibilities of real literary delicacy and accuracy. Shapiro has carefully made himself into a Sherwood Anderson or Sinclair Lewis character, the kind of American who thinks opera silly but who is willing, if pressed, to contribute handsomely to his local "Cultural Center." Shapiro thinks *Herzog* a "brilliant novel"; Henry Miller seems to him a great writer; he considers M. B. Tolson a distinguished poet who has not made it only because "critics" can't stand poets who are black. In folk judgments like these, Shapiro comes to resemble a sort of Yvor Winters reversed. In both, the program has quite corrupted the perceptions, and perhaps it is a similar kind of American parochialism, with all its invitations to crankhood, that has actuated both.

The side of Shapiro that is most likable he shows us in the best piece in *To Abolish Children,* a rambling, readable anti-essay titled "A *Malebolge* of Fourteen Hundred Books." Here he talks about his favorite books in his library, considering them not according to any *a priori* system of groupings familiar in critical practice, but alphabetically, as they stand on the shelves. Here we see him not thinking or formulating, which he does badly, but recalling, embracing and sentimentalizing, which he does convincingly once he escapes from some aristocratic literary form with which he is uneasily quarreling. Honesty and humanity are in this piece, and a relative freedom from his usual embarrass-

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ment in talking about "literature." This *"Malebolge"* — odious word — is to the bulk of his criticism what the energetic prose poems of *The Bourgeois Poet* (1964) are to his poetry. It is a successful realization of his urge to freedom from imported, un-American forms.

But despite occasional successes like these, Shapiro's career has largely a monitory value. He has dissipated his forces in that old sentimental-egalitarian American game of trying to create art while denying its validity and privileges. He is not comfortable with what he is making: its claims to special status embarrass him. He ends in that same nervous, apologetic relation to what he has made that has embarrassed and perverted countless American writers, including Whitman, Twain and Hemingway. It is ultimately the American terror of participating in a remote and perhaps useless kind of excellence, as well as the fear of being ridiculed at the barbershop as separate and pansy, that has done him in.

Paul Fussell, Jr.

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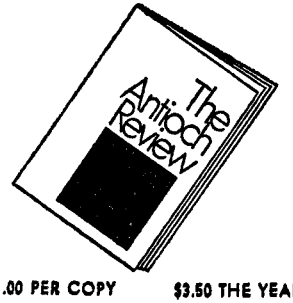

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LISTEN RUBEN FONTANEZ. By Jay Neugeboren. Houghton Mifflin. $4.50.
THE ANSWER. By Jeremy Larner. Macmillan. $4.95.

Paul Tyner, the most gifted of these three young novelists, turns in, with *Shoot It*, an attractive first performance. His plot turns on the killing of a Negro pursesnatcher by a white patrolman. Herbert G. Rucker, twenty-three, a rather likeable mediocrity, hardly a villain, has little insight into the springs of his impetuous act. He shows himself hazy and lackadaisical over the consequences that dog him, and the consequence at the foreground is a lawsuit for three million dollars brought by the widow, Hattie. Little attempt is made to win sympathy for her or the other Negroes. She loses her case when it is undermined by the key witness. Herby at the end gets a favorable court decision and also the girl, Stacy; only by then he is mangled and hospitalized from a wreck that occurred six months earlier. Widely scattered clues allow the supposition that self-punishment has unconsciously motivated the accident. Chief among these is the recurrent nightmare stemming from Herby's crime: he would find himself in jail and charging with lowered head at a spot of sweat on the wall of his cell. He shrugs off the part of the meaning he can derive with the reflection, "Everybody had suicide dreams." When the mechanism fails in his speeding car, he is hurled through the windshield and flat against a wall. Yet a large factor of coincidence persists. To avoid excessive explicitness younger writers will sometimes tend, as I think Tyner does, toward the opposite extreme of explanatory reticence.

The closing scene impresses one as arbitrary and contrived. Stacy, wildly promiscuous, heavily habituated to pot, hard and independent, had had casual sexual relations with Herby during their brief acquaintance before the accident, and he had lain in a coma during the intervening half year. Now at the hospital she sweetly but improbably proposes to take charge of his long recuperation and expresses the hope of their sharing a life. This saccherine melting into a Hollywood fadeout proves as disappointing as unexpected — if taken, that is, straight.

The occasional shifting of narrative attention away from the central character and unto a lesser one introduces the most fascinating aspect of the novel. Lamont, a fourteen-year-old shoeshine boy, had witnessed

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the killing from a fire escape. His avid interest in the case arises less from his agreement to testify on behalf of the plaintiff than from his passionate avocation, making documentaries. He secretly stalks Herby and Stacy the night before and the day of the smashup in order to film them and tape them for his "Portrait of the Accused." In court he calmly advances a theory of perception that destroys the value of his testimony out of an apparently scrupulous concern for the truth. His real purpose is self-dramatization and the exercise of creative control over what will be picked up by a tiny recorder in his pocket. He fails Hattie, though not from animosity, and saves Herby, though not from compassion. He remains indifferent to the others, except insofar as they supply him with documentary subject matter.

The title, *Shoot It,* refers to Herby's pistol and to Lamont's camera and recorder. The "it" shot is, first, a black victim depersonalized by the gunning of a nervous police officer, and, secondly, that officer and others as grist for the adolescent's cinematic mill. The interplay between the two types of shooting gives the novel affinities with *Blow Up,* wherein Antonioni too explores the connection implicit in the pun, between "shooting" in photography and in a murder. Lamont, his moral sense quenched by the necessities of making, is the figure of the artist. The artist corresponds to the killer-cop in regarding persons as objects to be willfully manipulated, or as if balls in a game of pool. The play and the players' behavior, in a poolroom that Herby frequents, add to the notion of shooting a third dimension with varied analogical and metaphorical bearings on the other two.

Precocious and detached, Lamont catches in his audiovisual medium a portion of the story linguistically recorded, and stands as a mocking counterpart of the precocious, detached author. Tyner maintains a cool, reportorial objectivity, ignoring such pertinent political and sociological issues as those of police brutality and race relations. Phrased imperatively, the title is an authorial command to the characters, "Shoot your 'thing' so that I can shoot mine." The fact that Lamont spares Herby simply out of aesthetic considerations can furnish the cue to redeem the closing scene from sentimentality. If the narrator, to further the parallel between Lamont and himself, gives Stacy to his protagonist out of the same considerations, the conclusion assumes ironic overtones as a comment on the arbitrary and manipulative aspects of fictional fabrication.

Tyner writes clean, lucid, colloquial prose. He pitches the narrative idiom, kept close to that of the characters, and the dialogue in nearly flawless tones. Lean and transparent, his style expresses a dis-

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ciplined and understated imagination. The urban settings are sketched in with sharp, sure strokes. He can evoke the ambience of poolrooms and bars, and he can render the types, the activities and the talk to be found in them, in vivid detail and pulsating concreteness. If he sometimes overindulges his facility, devoting too much space to atmospheric effects and his gallery of minor figures, the lingerings are compensated by a mastery reminiscent of Fitzgerald's.

In *Listen Ruben Fontanez,* a second novel, Jay Neugeboren, like Tyner, elects realism, and like him places the action against the swarming, variegated life of an American metropolis, in this case New York. Neugeboren touches upon a different set of current problems — those of ethnic minorities, of discipline in the schools, of poverty and welfare, and of gangs of delinquents — but, again like Tyner, he regards these rather as patterns integral to the social fabric than as problems to be solved or protested.

The heart of the narrative lies in the unfolding relationship between a Jewish teacher in his midsixties and a Puerto Rican pupil in his midteens. Harry Meyers, a widower and childless, aspires above all to avoid the fate of his six older brothers, all of whom had died before the age of sixty-nine. Ruben Fontanez makes voodoo dolls, and fashions one, complete with pins, in the likeness of his teacher of Hebrew, who, seizing it in his classroom at a junior high school in Williamsburg, is both charmed and perturbed. That incident generates intimacy between the two — conflict passing into affection — during the course of which Ruben and two companions, Marty and Manuel, adopt Mr. Meyers, care for him in illness, show him their ingenious means of survival and their haunts in hidden corners of the city, and save him from a vengeful attack by the brother of a Negro murderer whom he had once apprehended. While Ruben gains courage, maturity and trust from their association, the main point is the humanization of the protagonist. After his "games with three children" — "It is you who are playing the fool, Harry Meyers," he tells himself — he returns to teaching, which in his illness he had determined to abandon, and returns in a drastically altered frame of mind. Though he knows himself afflicted with cancer, for example, to live beyond sixty-nine has ceased to be an obsession. The foolish games with the children make him wiser, enabling him to face his brief future with new tolerance, self-reliance, openness and generosity.

Listen Ruben Fontanez has a clearer and more fully articulated design than *Shoot It,* though a less complex and inventive one. Neugeboren optimistically attributes to personal communion a capacity to

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reach across barriers of age, class, educational levels and ethnic backgrounds and transform the bleak life of an elderly man. The theme strikes me as too facilely imposed on the harsh fictional environment, as out of key with the sordidness, violence, prejudice, exploitation and rigidities that loom so large in this tough, knowing depiction of city existence. The locutionary traits of Harry Meyers, who tells his own story, grow irksome — the habit of referring to himself by his full name and the monotonous repetition of such expressions as "I can tell you this," "I can assure you," or "Listen to me." The flatness of the utterance is a burden to the book. The speech as well as the movements of the Puerto Ricans are rendered with greater verve. But though Neugeboren's language lacks the freshness of Tyner's, it never exhibits the tastelessness of Jeremy Larner's.

In *The Answer,* also a second novel, the narrator Alex employs such words as *jellyjam, meatball* and *spaghetti* — as verbs, in addition to *russian-rouletting* (red lights being driven through) and *twing-twonged.* The paragraph in which the last verb occurs must be savored in full:

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> The twanging twingtwonged louder, fiercer, swelling the room at the seams, shredding soundwaves into fine electric shrapnel to prick the pores of the skin and penetrate anus and ureter in twitching itching slither, penetrate the lips the nostrils the corners of the eyes, flood the inner ear and shoot screwdrivers to the brainstem.

The similes also carry a charge. Alex's pillow "soaked up a cacophony of noises, like a hunk of electrosponge amplifier," and "Having squeezed at last through the rear door I burst from the bus like a popping blackhead," when "Darkness clattered down like a pot lid." He offers such neologisms as "Youthquake," "Lamastery," "Buddhahood," and "amoebahood," and the cute circumlocution "my boyish tassle" (the penis). Someone once undertook, hilariously, a "pilgrimage to the Episcopal seminary in Pudendo Beach, California." Of course the narrator is very hip. He reads a grin "as if to say, dig those crazy people!" and notices that "the rest of them were having a ball," and explains that "we all could laugh laugh while we dug dug, because we were hip, dig, it was understood." The style, so jazzy and so forced, is an index to the quality of intelligence and imagination operative in the novel.

Its nucleus is the lengthy treatment of an experience with LSD, here called the Answer Drug. The episode occurs when Alex Randall, seeking a remedy for the alarming symptoms produced by the Drug on Benjy, his roommate, goes to Heavenly House, the headquarters of Dr. *Magus* Tyrtan and the cult beginning to flourish around him. The year is, insistently, 1964 — "remember this was back in '64, before the flood of potentates and publicity." Dr. Tyrtan has been dismissed from the medical faculty of a university in New England, the one the narrator attends (prudently unnamed, for many details belie the broad hints that it is Harvard). Assured that his fear for Benjy are unfounded, Alex stays over, and later consents to a "journey." He submits to the influence of Tyrtan, though leery of him all along, because he transfers to him much of the ambivalence felt toward his own father, a successful, self-made businessman. The son treasures a photograph of a youthful Mr. Randall dressed for a career he once briefly entertained, that of an Episcopalian clergyman. Tyrtan's religious fervor makes him a paternal surrogate who did follow a priestly rather than an industrial vocation. This scientist turned guru, broadly caricatured, is attracted to Alex from watching him play football and from reading his poetry (the character of which can be inferred from the prose). This enthusiasm, unintelligible except to its egocentric recipient, is continuously purred in soft, embarrassing, though presumably nonerotic compliments:

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"You're so beautiful. You're so beautiful, Alex." "I get the most amazing vibrations."

The trip itself turns out to be unsuitable, at least in this essay, to fictional reproduction. Illuminations, or "manifestations," pour in upon Alex and out from him when high until one is inundated by the flood of pseudo-epiphanies. From the inside, the participant's perspective, they may be exciting; from the outside, the reader's, they are undramatic and pretentious. We are not meant to be taken in, but we are not meant, either, to be bored. It is very much like being sober and subjected to the profundities of a philosophizing drunk.

Larner differs from Tyner and Neugeboren not in choosing a subject from the headlines but in treating it with didactic intent. The overriding "irony" is the news (of '64) that the Answer Drug yields no answers. Its most famous proponent is silly and dangerous. His Oriental religiosity, with all its talk about the obliteration of the self and the reality of the Clear Light of the Void, rings with hollow absurdity. He denies the injurious effect of the Drug, though under its sway Benjy hangs himself and Amber, a juvenile "pilgrim" at the House, becomes catatonic. Along with the exposé goes a message, formulated in the "Postscript" (dated in the late '70's!), that we must "face one another, deal with our own selves — no matter how dear the cost or brief the time." This, the "true" answer of the title, is proferred only tersely and vaguely at the end, and wants an adequate dramatic embodiment. Cathy, with whom Alex has had an affair, comes nearest to supplying the want, for her small common sense almost passes for wisdom among these shallow, affected and freakish characters. One continuously feels distrustful of the narrative, and so the moralistic argument fails of persuasiveness.

This novel might have an appeal for certain aging academic critics, deluding them into fancying themselves au courant with the lingo and habits of the student generation without disturbing their complacencies or, in most cases, their literary sensibilities. For others a reading of *The Answer* will be a bad trip.

Joseph Pequigney

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WHAT HAD BEEN A SPRINGTIME
OF HOPE BECAME...

PRAGUE:
THE SUMMER OF TANKS

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AND GUNS ENOUGH TO KILL THE
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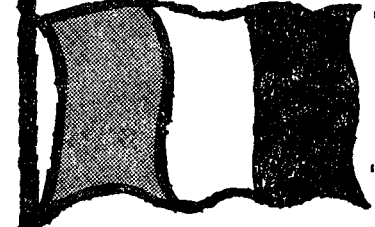

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U. AND NON-U.

THE MODERN CENTURY. By Northrop Frye. Oxford. $3.00.

Northrop Frye's book is a surprise, for it is not mainly about modern literature, but an individual — I do not say personal — survey of the whole "modern century." Frye has been accused of ignoring history and society in his criticism and immuring literature in a timeless vacuum of archetypal myths. This book perhaps is his answer, a consideration of the culture of the last hundred years, *our* culture, especially in terms of the intricate role of literature within it. It is a work of high commitment, diagnostic and prescriptive rather than professorial, a tract for the times. Frye is quietly moving down the path of McLuhan, Marcuse and Norman Brown, from scholar to sage, from his own discipline to the politics of culture.

As sage, however, Frye lacks new and compelling doctrine. He turns out to be an old-fashioned liberal humanist, fearful of mass culture, contemptuous of nationalism, basically committed to the life of disinterested reason that the modern century has done so much to undermine. This results in a peculiar tension between Frye and his material, as if Bertrand Russell had solemnly undertaken a short life of Saint Theresa or Rimbaud. In Frye's first book, on Blake, a similar tension helped produce a masterpiece; by writing a brilliant schoolman's paraphrase of Blake's system he demonstrated its utter sanity and coherence for the first time. He was understandably less successful in the *Anatomy of Criticism* when he tried to elicit a comparably strict design from the whole of literature. That corpus proved much less rational than Blake's, and stubbornly miscellaneous in the face of Frye's staggering powers of original synthesis. This conflict resulted in too casual and tendentious a treatment of individual works, so that the theoretical categories remained skeletal and amounted to little more than a private mythology, inferior to Blake's, rather than a synoptic ontology of literature. Modern literature provides similar resistance to Frye in the critical part of *The Modern Century*, and he mostly retreats from system to mere summary, at times illuminating but otherwise marred by intellectual slackness and the absence of a discernible argument.

There is, however, a more disciplined focus than in the *Anatomy*, for in recent years Frye has been atoning for his sins by writing some of the practical criticism which, as he himself admitted, was glaringly wanting in that book. Yet even on single writers or periods his method

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remains synoptic and generalizing. Frye always establishes a distance, at once heuristic and self-protective, between himself and his subject. He aims at precision of outline rather than intimacy or concreteness of detail. The second of the three lectures which make up *The Modern Century* is called "Improved Binoculars"; for the New Critical microscope Frye substitutes archetypal binoculars, both of which turn criticism into pseudo-science, both of which enable one to see without being seen, almost without being there. Here is a typically summary sentence from the present book: "Whatever is progressive develops a certain autonomy, and reactions to it consequently divide: some feel that it will bring about vast improvements in human life by itself, others are more concerned with the loss of human control over it." How many disorderly, passionate commitments are crudely but not uselessly put in their place by so schematic a résumé! The prose is unmistakeably Frye's, a medium conveying its own distinctive message. Frye has a deserved reputation for writing "well" (read: clearly and fluently), but there is something passionless and cerebral about his very lucidity, something machinelike in his unflappable evenness of tone. His style is so free of mannerism that it has itself become a recognizable manner. It proclaims a detachment and intellectual purity, a resilience against existential doubts and confusions. Its message is Only Disconnect, in return for which it offers knowledge without pain or risk.

A certain idea of the university is therefore central to Frye's plan for society as a whole. He sees the university both as an achieved model of community and as a center of that disinterestedness and "spiritual authority" which enable us to see the "real form of human society" as "revealed to us through the study of the arts and sciences" (as he writes elsewhere). He follows a number of modern writers (and the later Blake) in seeing society as a "respressive anxiety-structure" which can be undermined only by a revolution in human consciousness, not through political activism. Frye is therefore sanguine about the growing intimacy between contemporary art and the university. He envisions a university, energized by the modernist consciousness and the modernist antagonism to contemporary life, becoming an instrument of social change. Along with the communications media (much of it unfortunately in enemy hands), our artistic and educational institutions, he says, form a "leisure structure" which could eventually rival the power of the economic and political structures, since it can "fulfil the entire range of non-material human needs"; hopefully, this will create "a system of checks and balances which will prevent any one of our new three estates from becoming too powerful."

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It would be hard to fully disentangle possibility from fantasy here. If *The Modern Century* gives us Frye's politics of culture it should be evident from this brief glimpse how apolitical he really is. For Frye, despite the determined impersonality of his work, the only genuine avenue of change is individual, not social or institutional; he asserts "that no improvement of the human situation can take place independent of the human will to improve, and that confidence in automatic or impersonal improvement is always misplaced." What distinguishes Frye from Eisenhower or from a doctrinaire conservative is his Blakean vision of unfallen man, his liberal faith in the individual will to change, which he discerns beneath the rubble of alienation and social manipulation, just as he can see the "buried or uncreated ideal" of America — embodied in "Thoreau, Whitman, and the personality of Lincoln" — beyond the machinations of a superpower and its Asian war. His politics are at once blind and visionary.

Frye's emphasis on the autonomous and self-critical individual makes him as sensitive as Marcuse to the prevailing forms of manipulation in a supposedly free society, such as advertising and propaganda. (The first, the diagnostic lecture is easily the best thing in the book.) It also makes him a pungent critic of the technological determinism of McLuhan and, more platitudinously, of the crude historical determinism of some Marxists. But he takes no account of the revisionist Marxism of recent years, which seeks a middle way that unites individual and historical change. Such a unity was anticipated by Blake in his figure of Orc, who embodies what many of the Romantic poets first saw in the French Revolution: not only political emancipation but a renewal of human nature, a liberation of the mind from the trammels of repression.

But Blake himself grew disenchanted, and the hero of the later prophetic books is no longer the rebel Orc, who now becomes trapped in a cycle of revolution and reaction, but the artist Los, the visionary who will preside over an apocalyptic transformation of human consciousness. Frye follows this later Blake, but though there are some moving utopian moments in *The Modern Century*, what he gives us in the prescriptive parts is often no more than a dreary and pallid version of Blake's faith in art as an instrument of salvation. His projected alliance between art and the universities, itself a far cry from apocalypse, does a grave disservice to both of them. Were the universities ever the strongholds of Arnoldian disinterestedness that he imagines? If so, internal pressures of advocacy have arisen to combat other forces of social control and manipulation. Frye largely ignores the current ferment that may be completely transforming the university. He refers to recent manifestations

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of campus activism as a sort of benevolent and pardonable *trahison des clercs*, but otherwise he is content to write about an abstract idea of the university rather than what is actually happening.

Moreover, he demands a similarly abstract disinterestedness from art, and seems willing to emasculate it if he should detect impure gestures of advocacy. He is confident that the "reactionary and anti-social attitudes" of so much of modernist writing will lose their force when turned into course assignments:

> . . . [W]hen contemporary authors are assigned for compulsory reading, and when they are taught in a way that relates them to their cultural heritage, a certain detachment comes into the attitude toward them. Not all the detachment is good, but one thing about it is: the social attitude of the writer is taken over by the social attitude of education itself, and loses its crankiness by being placed in a social context. Study, as distinct from direct response, is a cool medium, and even the most blatant advocacy of violence and terror may be, like Satan in the Bible, transformed into an angel of light by being regarded as a contribution to modern thought.

Here the message of Frye's style becomes his explicit message as well. It is a bad but not an uncharacteristic moment, when Frye seems to embody so much that is complacent and devitalizing in our universities and in the liberal culture to which they belong, so much that the modern writers set out to destroy. How chillingly ironic that they themselves, trimmed of their "crankiness," should now be skewered and served up to the next generation as "contributions to modern thought."

Morris Dickstein

MANCHILD IN THE PROMISED LAND

STOP-TIME. By Frank Conroy. Viking Press. $5.95.

I recently went through the heartache of committing a young man to a mental institution in Boston. He is twenty-two, and last year graduated from Harvard. I had known him as a student, not a patient. Once, in a paper, he scorned psychiatrists and the clichés they peddle to America's middle class: "Psychiatrists offer people with diplomas, but no real education, a pleasant, good-tasting stew — a dash

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of medicine, a little bit of philosophy, some 'art,' some 'science,' some 'depth.' We eat it and for a moment we don't feel hungry any more."

He went on to demonstrate how easily and outrageously "the psychiatric world-view" (as he called a particular profession's ideological tendencies) takes care of life's ironies and riddles. There are all those labels, all those ways of giving a name to a person, or calling him a name. There is "mental health," which sounds as if it can be determined by a thermometer, a stethoscope. And there are the doctors themselves, urging on their patients "adaptation," or "adjustment," or "group experience." Still, his concluding remarks were charitable — and full of yet another set of images: "The blind lead the blind. Psychiatrists are not the idiots or monsters that some critics would have them be. They are trying to keep the traffic on our new highways moving. They are the good cop, and we are grateful to them. They tell us where we're supposed to go, the best way to get there. If we get stalled, they help us out — with a push or a ride. If a car doesn't belong on the road they take care of that, too. They know where all the junk yards are, all the repair shops and service stations. They know the land, the larger picture. With their special radios and telephones and sirens and whirling lights they can 'communicate' better than the rest of us."

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Now he has had to take cover, and I was the cop who told him how. A gifted, sensitive youth, he does not have a good "prognosis." His past, all his early sorrows and later confusions, are pressing on him with a vengeance. I suppose I could go back, read his various themes or papers, and find in them the "signs," the foreboding evidence that all was not and would not be well. We're good at that, looking back at a life and making sense of it. We're good at "explaining" things, at making statements about what happened or what *is*. We're not falsely modest either. Here, for example, is how a psychoanalyst comes to terms with the issue of creativity: "The problem is not one of organic inferiority per se, but rather one of body image formation, permanently distorted self-representation, cathectic imbalance, irreversible ego impairment and ego restitution."

So, you see, it's not so mysterious after all. One man's "irreversible ego impairment" contrasts with another's "ego restitution." Writers like Frank Conroy may have had a bad time of it, but they don't go under. They swim, or rather, they "restitute." Now I don't know why you restitute and I go mad with megalomania and have to enter a hospital, or become a psychiatrist, or an astronaut in love with the wild blue yonder or President of the United States. But "we don't have all the answers," as I hear it put occasionally at clinical staff conferences. Unfortunately Gertrude Stein never got around to asking psychiatrists to ask themselves what *questions* they have (or should have) in mind.

All of this comes to my mind as I think about Frank Conroy's autobiography, *Stop-time*, an unnerving, beautifully wrought book whose influence becomes at times hypnotic. The author summons his childhood so insistently, so shrewdly, so provocatively that the reader has no choice but to submit. A novelist takes advantage of an agreed-upon tradition that provides the writer and his audience with the common ground of the mind's willingness to read and *imagine*. The ordinary biographer (or the "great man" who writes his own biography) calls upon something else. We all recognize glory; and if we can't achieve it, we can at least learn of (and immerse ourselves in) its rise and fall. But what of the "ordinary" man, who has only his own unspectacular story to tell? He refuses us the free reign of fantasy. He gives us no example to follow, no clues about how to win, about onetime or seeming losers somehow come out on top. All we have, in this instance, is Frank Conroy. He is upon us because he is a writer, but he appears to have very little consideration for us. Who is he, after all, and why should we care what happened to him when he was a small boy?

As a writer, of course, Frank Conroy's task is to make us care. He

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must exercise the power and skill of his writing hand in such a way that we forgive him for the explicitly factual or "real" content of his book, and indeed forgive him for being a young, unknown person just beginning his "career." Nor can he really fall back on the admittedly "strange" or "unusual" features of his past — no doubt full of "distorted self-representations" and even a few serious "cathectic imbalances." Yes, his parents were an offbeat pair, the mother, Dagmar, from a bourgeois Danish family, the father a rather well-to-do man with a ruinous capacity for alcohol and a turn-of-mind that could be variously called bizarre, gothic, unconventional or pathological. Nor do all children lose their fathers when young, and then acquire a stepfather like Jean, who isn't really a Southerner, a fading aristocrat from the region's "old-order," but an un-American gentleman, literally a soft, delicate, useless man cut off from the worldly and cynical French nobility. America's schemes and chances tempt him; he wants to graft them on to himself. He spends his life trying to do so; but the transplant won't take. Though he behaves like a buccaneer or an entrepreneur who someday will make it — and prove everyone conventionally wrong — he is at heart a very sad man, given to foolish ideas that lead nowhere. For his stepson, though, he is a decent and reasonably tolerant man — something, if not enough.

Jean and Dagmar lived wandering, pointless lives. They moved from New York to Florida and back. For a while they settled in a home for retarded children where they worked as caretakers or aides on the night shift. They gained then lost an assortment of jobs, and were it not for a substantial income from Dagmar's first husband, from Frank Conroy's father, they might well have lived classically poor and shiftless lives. With money guaranteed every month they could be eccentric, marginal, foolish — but well-fed, well-clothed and even at times rather indulgent. In fact money has a critical role in their activities — and in their son's survival and emergence as an intelligent, observant, well-educated person. They have to have some purpose, and the vain pursuit of a fortune is a convenient one — along with sex or escapist travel.

Whatever their hang-ups or "problems" they do not emerge in their son's eyes as particularly awful or cruel people. They are each self-centered, and in a way bound to one another by that shared trait. They gave Frank Conroy a kind of distant attention, which in turn enabled him to become a detached, knowing, stubbornly independent person. They have eyes only for themselves, and he develops an almost frightening "cool": what is there is seen, but quietly and exactly rather than excitedly. There are lapses, when he runs away and the whole world

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seems ready to cave in. He is someone about to give up — perhaps fatally so. For a moment things appear blurred, confused and dangerous; but recovery comes quickly and soon the wayward youth is back in a comfortable New York apartment. His mother is in Europe, his stepfather is hopelessly caught up in an affair with a mad-woman. He is left with the consolations of comfortable privacy and a chance to forge his own way, his own world.

It is, of course, foolish to speculate about what might have become of Frank Conroy had he not been left a substantial and carefully controlled income by his father. He himself comes to the end of his story on a distinctly hopeful note: "My trustee had paid my tuition and agreed to an allowance of a hundred dollars a month. I was rich and I was free."

He had been admitted to Haverford College, and somehow knew even then that his future was not as bleak and foundering as his parents' lives were. If they had done nothing else they had provided him with an example *not* to follow — no mean gift for an otherwise capable and determined young man. Had there been no Haverford for him, no trip to Paris, no Jaguar to drive, might he have become one more drifter, one more sad or desperate man whose struggles lead to nothing remotely like the book *Stop-time*?

To be sure the rich produce more than their fair share of tormented souls, but Frank Conroy's book is among other things an additional reminder — if any is needed — that money, "plain old" money, crass and vulgar money helps a lot and can even be called redemptive now and then. When a brilliant and sensitive young man is moody and on the run it is handy to have the range of possibilities and opportunities that a steady income enables. In fact one feels that all along the loneliness and confusion of Frank Conroy's early life were no match for what he could see and do as an intelligent person whose parents could give him, in place of love, a certain easy and ironic confidence that luck is a real thing and that fate is generous if not kind. He quite obviously knows all this because he avoids self-pity, demonstrates his capacity for humor, and in general emerges as a man who has had his troubles but is well on his way to making them much less significant than his power and competence as a writer.

Robert Coles

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